MERLIN

Edited by Alexander Trocchi

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EDITORIAL

This is the first number of a quarterly magazine of literature.

The size of future numbers and their continued appearance will be determined by the amount of suitable material received and the response of subscribers.

The editor is interested only in those contributions which compare favourably with the writing published in the first issue. He will welcome any contribution towards finance; the magazine, if it is to continue to exist, must be able to support itself and to pay contributers a reasonable rate.

The lip service paid to the small magazine and its benison does not help to preserve it as an actuality. And to preserve it as such is essential if prospective contributers are to have confidence in the magazine.

For this reason the editor of MERLIN appeals here and now for the support of the reader, asks him to become a subscriber, and, if he can afford it, a "life subscriber". All literary ventures of this nature depend finally upon subscribers rather than advertisers, and, under present-day conditions, MERLIN must have a subscription list if the selling price of the magazine is to be kept within reasonable limits.

Paris, 15 *May* 1952.

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SPRING 1952

I. THE MONKEY

The monkey laughs and wraps
his arms around himself,
or hangs if he likes
by one hand in the sky—
We notice our fingers and nails
how finely they are made
for scratching in the matted hair
or the various little orifices,
the ear where the whisper turns.

In Florida there is a river,
Gradually we begin to remember,
when a man unfolds his map
of human skin, a tortuous course
with a name like a snake,
and as the two of us descend,
the ends of drowned, dead sticks
that seem to be the fingertips
of the green and secret water

Begin to move, two hooded eyes,
propelled by the smooth body
of the moccassin, whose deadly head
is about the size of your thumb,
and sends that quiet chill
across the surface of the river
into the dark vegetation.
The water when it draws away
exposes the giant roots of the teeth.

'Where on earth can we be ?'—
sitting out on the pleasure deck
under the bright striped awning
with the tassels swinging like scalps—

'There's a tribe of wild monkeys
that somehow...over from Africa'—
holding the camera like our brain
in our hands, waiting for the
savage fact to strike—

He was sitting up very high
on a branch of the tragic
cypress tree, that has been dying
and shedding its leaves for centuries—
a small, hunched creature, a dog,
abandoned up there in the air
with nothing left to hide himself
and no way to get down,
after the subsiding of the flood.

'Poor thing. He's pitiful.'—
except for a certain pertinacity,
more than the knot on the log,
which distinguishes him in his pictures ;
a fierceness of eye—'He looks like
he hasn't moved for years.
But I wouldn't get too near.
Even at this distance...
to feel his skin on me'—

The alligator slid into the river,
the nigger stripped and dived,
a thrashing in mid-channel,
by which he was gradually getting
hold of the animal, dragging her
back up on to the bank, where we saw—
'The jaws... very weak... in opening...
a child might keep... but the awe—
full power of the slamming closed.'—

Them struggling in their mud, hugging
together, her ivory belly, his
arms and legs locked around
it with those finny feet kicking
to high heaven, and the great
tail flailing the thin air—
until he pressed in with his thumb
one soft and mortal spot between the eyes,
'And dying is a kind of sliding back'—.

'Why', asked the lady, 'doesn't he use
a knife ?' And the captain explained
that this was the man's black pride.
And he rose up from her triumphant—
Magnificent creature. Which do you mean ?
His little buttocks like apples.
She took hold of the lobe of my ear,
'You will live to be old',
she whispered, 'and do great deeds.'

I know a man from Texas,
can grab the rattlers by the tail
and snap them like a whip,
cracking their vertebrae.
He is the curse of all the snakes ;
steals the poison out of their mouths
and gives it to the medicine men.
Sad to say that the little children
all steal away from his cunning hands.

This is a song the sad man sings,
sitting in his place on the pleasure deck
under the awning with the tassels,
following the tortuous course of the river
into a lake like the waiting brain—
of the sad man sitting on our bed,
singing to ourself with a crazy
kind of gladness in our despair,
that we are still, actually, here.

— William Burford

A MEETING

Remembering all manner of things, faces, voices, smells, situations, which he knew but which he had forgotten—almost, he thought, as though he had tricked himself into forgetting them, marks of fear or shame erased from his memory as from a diary, a bed, or a room, because he no longer wanted them, because they were irrelevant, because they threatened his present identity—he was aware of his own rejection of them, but he was aware of it only indirectly in the vague irritation which he felt at the sight of his colleagues who had scarcely existed for him the day before, or at the sight of the blot which clung to the tail of the last figure in the column of figures in front of him.

He would have liked to take off his jacket and the tie which was knotted in a tiny red knot, close, at his throat, but he put the thought away from him again because it was impossible with old Beakin sitting there and one of the partners, Mr. Alan Curtis or young Mr. Fenton, likely to come in at any moment.

Since ten o'clock in the morning the heat had been unbearable. His lunch in the smokeroom of the restaurant across the street had been hot, colourless, tasteless. Stewed rabbit at one and-ninepence, all bones. Susie, the waitress, agreed with him, strongly enough to suggest that she considered the affront a personal one. And us girls (the waitresses) doin our best to keep you regular gentlemen satisfied. It was the new cook, she said. She couldn't boil water without singeing it. He could still see the fork lying in cold gravy, little beads of solidified fat on the prongs. Susie removed the plate with her red hand. Afterwards, he had walked about the streets for a while, but it was so hot and the streets were so crowded with people going and coming from lunch that he had returned to the office early.

He found himself resenting the sun. It sprawled across the papers in front of him and glinted painfully in the lenses of his spectacles. It was a nuisance. He felt a similar vague resentment against the fat round buttocks of Miss Eileen Lanelly tightening under a shiny blue serge skirt as she bent down to pick up a pencil from the floor. She had a habit of dropping things. And today she had made a mistake in one of the ledgers.

"Really, Miss Lanelly," Beakin had said, "in the six years you've been with us I have learned to expect more accuracy from you. Such a trifling mistake! What would the auditors say?"

Miss Lanelly had supported from childhood an air of conscious guilt. Mr. Beakin was inspired by it and he fed on it like a bird.

"I can't help it, Mr. Beakin, it's so terribly hot! I can't concentrate in all this heat."

"The work must go on, Miss Lanelly," Mr. Beakin said in his thin soursweet way. "Perhaps if you were to open the window..."

The window was open now and a wall of stale cityspent air moved in with the sunlight. The broad world of Miss Lanelly diminished as she straightened up and moved over to the filing cabinet.

A fly settled on the back of his hand. He became interested in its movement, in the dull veined lustre of its minute wings and its black buttonlike eyes, flat, built outwards like two headlamps ; he wondered what it would look like through a microscope, and then he became aware that Mr. Beakin was watching him and he allowed his eyes to be drawn back towards the papers on his desk. The suggestion of a sex-life for Miss Lanelly intrigued him. It was, he was sure, a small sex-life, an insectal one, almost non-existent, irritant rather than active, and smothered in tweeds, blind, impotent, diminutive, sunk, like a crippled ant beneath a clod of earth, in the amorphous mass of flesh which she appeared to have bundled each morning with some difficulty into her clothes.

A moment ago, surreptitiously, she had slipped something into her mouth. A piece of chocolate, he supposed. He had seen the silver paper and the crushed wrapper in her wastepaper basket. She was fond of chocolate. He supposed she menstruated like other women ; he wondered. He concluded that she would be ashamed of it.

The sun fell on Mr. Beakin and on the fly and on the inkpots and pens and on the two other male clerks, Riley and Wilson. It inclined like a wedge towards the filing cabinet where Miss Lanelly pretended to be looking for something.

He brushed the fly away and looked at his thumbnail. The noise of traffic came up from the street through the open window. A wasp landed suddenly on the ledge, crawled a few inches, and then flew out again into the sunlight.

Mr. Beakin coughed and Riley whispered something to Wilson. He couldn't hear what they were saying. He looked without interest at them. James Fidler did not like his colleagues and seldom spoke to them. He nodded to them each morning as he came in and then he ignored them as completely as possible. The two clerks were a tiresome pair, eternally amused in a silly secretive way. It had always struck him as rather ludicrous that five people with so little in common should pass the greater part of their waking life together, filing, indexing, keeping the ledgers in order. He supposed they all had their reasons. For

Beakin who was over sixty it had been a career. For Fidler himself it was "part of the routine" ; he had always considered it, or avoided considering it, in those vague terms. Riley and Wilson were grown-up schoolboys. They went to football matches on Saturday afternoons. The office was "a job" for them. They were free at five-thirty. And Miss Lanelly, professedly, "needed the money". As though they all didn't... but Miss Lanelly appeared to be convinced that she "needed the money" in a different way : the rest of the staff worked, and it was proper that they should do so, but Miss Lanelly worked because she "needed the money". That impression he had gathered from conversations overheard.

The afternoon was nearly over. At five-thirty he would catch a bus for the suburb in which he lived and he would eat his evening meal with his mother and his sister. It was an absurdity which he accepted. The fact that they were his mother and his sister had no bearing on the apparent fortuitousness of the situation. Each evening he stepped on to a bus which took him to where he had never decided to be.

His sister appalled him, a frail brittle orange woman in her early fifties who had grown out of the gangly young woman whom he had surprised in the act of admiring herself in front of the wardrobe mirror, and who, still naked and still terrible, had come upon him in his room that night and wrestled with him on his bed. She was stronger than he was and she forced him to allow her to remain with him. She lay quite still without speaking with one arm round about him pressing him close to her until he imagined that he could feel the heavy movement of her blood against his skin. After a long time she asked him to lie on top of her, it wouldn't hurt him, she said, but he was too terrified to move or even to speak and a few minutes later he felt her grip relax and, without saying anything, she left him and closed the door quietly behind her.

Neither his sister nor himself had ever referred to the incident. They had always disliked each other. Looking at her now it was difficult to believe that it had ever happened.

Kate Fidler worked in a confectioner's shop ; perhaps he disliked her more because of that. She was resigned. She respected "her betters", an obsequious woman who served candy and chocolate and toffees and powdered her face with a very bright pink powder which caked into ugly little islands round her nose. She wore it because it was powder and because "all ladies powdered themselves". She never used a mirror.

There was no conversation at table. Kate disapproved of him. He had no ambition, she said, but always to the other woman, the mother; she never spoke to him directly. And his mother's conversation was limited to her chronic arthritis. It was not a pleasant meal. That was why he had been so disappointed with the rabbit at lunchtime, he looked forward to his lunch in the smokeroom. The evening meal followed a pattern, it was grotesque. Most of the time Fidler looked at his plate, contemplating what was on it, tough little morsels of stewed meat or boiled cod, unappetizingly transparent, like candles, conscious all the time of Kate's sniffing and of the low sucking noise which came from his mother as she picked at her food. The house itself was shabby, anonymous, and an oldfemale smell pervaded it.

The fly had disappeared. Out of the corner of his eye he watched Miss Lanelly move away from the filing cabinet.

"Have you finished it, James?" Beakin was saying.

"In a moment, Mr. Beakin."

"I don't know what's come over the people in this office," the manager said, looking at the clock. "A little sun and the whole routine goes to pot..."

Miss Lanelly was grinning at him, a knowing look now Beakin had turned his back. He felt uncomfortable and ignored her. As the "assistant manager"—it was not his official title but he was the senior when Beakin was on holiday, ah, Fidler of course! Mr. Alan Curtis would say on those occasions—he considered it impertinent of her. He laughed at his own feelings, but it was a question of habit. Miss Lanelly was a comparative newcomer while Fidler himself had been with the firm for twenty-two years; the miles of copper-plate handwriting, the office stamps, the endless paper clips were as much part of his past as the little scar above his right eye or as the few furtive adventures he had had with women. Eileen Lanelly's grin recalled those adventures to him; it was friendly, she was inviting him to share something with her but he found himself resenting her offer.

He tried to concentrate on the figures in front of him but they had become insignificant. His eye returned to the blot and stopped there. The fly was walking across the paper towards his hand. For a moment it held his attention and then he began to think of his two weeks' holiday which began the following Monday.

The sky was clouding over.

Mr. Beakin put on his hat and Riley and Wilson pretented to tidy up their desks. They were a smug pair.

"James," Mr. Beakin said, "I wonder if you'd mind finishing that before you leave ? If you're not in a hurry..."

He nodded. He felt no inclination to get home quickly.

"And you, Miss Lanelly, if you would put right that little mistake of yours in the ledger..."

"Yes, Mr. Beakin."

"Use the new eraser, Miss Lanelly. It doesn't make such an ugly mark as the old one."

"Yes, Mr. Beakin." A singsong voice. Ten years too young for her.

Beakin ignored it. "Goodnight Riley, goodnight Wilson," he said. His eye caught Fidler's for a moment and then he went out, humming.

When he had gone Wilson winked at Riley.

"See that it's finished, James!" Wilson said crookedly from under his little black moustache.

Riley grinned and slammed the lid of his desk. "Looks like rain", he said. "Thunder."

Fidler ignored them.

"Come, Riley," Wilson said, and they went out together. He listened to the neatnasty voices as they died away in the corridor. Wilson was married. Four years ago Fidler had donated five shillings towards his wedding present. He couldn't remember what it was they gave him, something silly with a meaningless inscription.

Miss Lanelly turned towards him. They were alone now. "They think they're funny," she said, but he did not answer. He appeared to be engrossed in the papers in front of him.

She walked over to the window and looked out.

When he looked up she was lighting a cigarette. He noticed that one of her stockings was laddered just below and behind her knee ; it disappeared under her skirt.

He felt a sudden desire to laugh.

"Don't be long with that ledger, Miss Lanelly." he said after a few moments. "I want to lock up."

She was still standing at the window, looking out, with the extinguished match in her hand. Riley and Wilson called her Eileen.

"Oh, damn Beakin !" she said. "I'll do it in the morning before he comes in. There's the rain on now, Mr. Fidler. It's heavy."

The rain spattered in little bouncing drops on the windowsill. Automatically he glanced over at the coatrack. He had not brought his umbrella and he felt vaguely annoyed with himself ; he seldom came out without an umbrella.

"Oh God !" Miss Lanelly said. "What a day ! First the sun and now this ! I don't know why people stay in this country ! Were you ever in the south of France, Mr. Fidler ?"

"No." He put the cap on his fountain pen and replaced it in his pocket beside his pocket handkerchief.

She was a heavy woman, as tall as he was, her clothes always giving the impression that she was held together by pins.

"Why do people stay anywhere or do anything?" he said. "Why do they?"

"Four pounds a week," she said. "That's easy!"

He gathered the papers together. "You could earn more elsewhere," he said.

"Oh, I don't know, there'd always be something. Rain in June. Just look at it!"

"There always is," he agreed. He looked at his watch.

"Just look at it !" she said again.

"It *is* heavy," he said, "but it won't last long."

Heavy rain never lasted for long, fine rain lasted for days. He had known that since he was a boy, like snowdrops in January and croci in February. He wondered how many times in his life he had said those exact words "It *is* heavy but it won't last..." as though he were enunciating a self-evident proposition.

"No, thank goodness," Miss Lanelly said.

Evidently it was part of her past too, part of her girlhood. It occurred to him that he did not know very much about Miss Lanelly. This is Miss Lanelly, she sings in our church choir. Miss Lanelly wears hobble skirts and catches cold every March. She "needs the money"... When she came to the office first Riley had gone out with her once or twice ("for a lark") but it had not come to anything, and now they were hardly on speaking terms. She was cold, Riley said.

"Beakin says I can't take my holidays till September this year," Miss Lanelly said. "Can you imagine that? Sit in this lousy place all through the summer and then two weeks, *two weeks* at the tail end!" She had taken out one of her hairclips and she was holding it in her mouth while she combed her hair. "I felt like going to see old Curtis about it."

It was mouse-coloured hair.

"You'd have a better chance with Fenton."

She replaced the hairclip and laughed. "Oh no, not him ! You know what he said ?—If you'll just speak to Mr. Beakin about it, Miss Lanelly, I am sure he will accomodate you—can you imagine that? Fenton! He's scared to death of Beakin!"

Fidler smiled. It was the first time in six years that he had really talked to Miss Lanelly. He liked her explosiveness, it was fresh, feminine. And she wasn't old. He found himself wondering what it would be like to be married to Miss Lanelly.

"Are you ready?" he said. "I want to lock up now."

"Lock up ? Why ? What is there to steal ? A few mouldy accounts!"

"And the new eraser," he said.

She laughed. "Oh, I'm ready when you are, I'll do the ledger in the morning."

"Good."

It gave him pleasure, somehow, to be *in* on this defiance of Mr. Beakin. It had never occurred to him to be defiant himself any more than it had ever occurred to him to lodge apart from his mother and his sister. It was not that he had Kate's resignation, which was indulgent; he accepted Mr. Beakin and the order he represented from habit, without committing himself, because his desire to rebel was no stronger than his desire to submit; he could find no motive in himself to do either. Kate's abject triumph, the certainty that spoke through thin oldwoman lips, sickened him. It was unhealthy. Miss Lanelly's bubbling impertinence was refreshing.

She put away her powder compact, arranged the white bow at her neck, and they walked down the stairs together to the street door. The rain was still coming down heavily, ringing whitely on the pavements. It occurred to him that it had been raining for precisely ten minutes.

"It can't last," she said, glancing up the street.

Except for the traffic it was almost deserted. A few people with umbrellas were still in the street, leaning forward against the rain. Others crowded in shop doorways. He heard his lips saying "tuttut" in vexation.

Miss Lanelly giggled. "It's like a showerbath," she said.

"A monsoon."

"What did you say?"

"A monsoon," he said.

"Oh ! I thought you said it would stop soon..."

"I like the rain," he said.

She didn't answer him. Perhaps she hadn't heard him. The rain continued to fall in front of them like a sparkling bead curtain. Little gushers of water rose from under the wheels of passing tramcars.

After a few minutes it occurred to him to invite her for a drink.

"We might as well," Miss Lanelly said. "It'd be better than standing here anyway. It's got cold suddenly."

"It'll be warm again after the rain," he said, "it won't do any harm."

"Oh, I like the rain," she said, "but let's go now. There's a bar opposite, isn't there?"

"Yes, the Royal."

"We'll make a dash for it," she said.

He put up his collar and they ran across the street together and through the revolving doorway.

"Oh, my God!" she said, breathless and laughing, "I'm soaked!" She looked down at herself. "Damn! I've laddered my stocking..."

Miss Lanelly, sipping her sherry, felt comfortable for the first time that day.

The bar was crowded, hot and damp from the damp garments of the customers. It was nearly six o'clock. Fidler was drinking whiskey and listening absently for the rain to stop. He was conscious of himself in a wallmirror, a little man in spectacles, unprepossessing, with a permanent stoop and still wearing his discoloured soft hat ; and the profile of the woman beside him—he could feel the heat of her body close to his own—did not attract him, it was rather stupid, he thought. She smelt of wet clothes and make-up and woman.

"Do you live far?" Miss Lamelly asked him after a moment.

"Not far, about twenty minutes in the bus, a few stops after East Park."

"Oh."

She was looking at him with large friendly eyes and he felt attracted and repelled at the same time, big and soft and clumsy. "Our elephant" Riley called her once with that prurient little snigger of his. Riley had the face of a fox, red and pointed.

Fidler was thoughtful. Since her last remark she had not looked at him. The "oh" had been non-committal. He wondered whether she had asked merely out of politeness.

"And you ?"

"There's the thunder again," she said.

It was a loud clap, it broke slowly into the crowded bar. For a moment everyone was silent and then the glasses clinked and laughter broke out again.

"Ominous, isn't it?" he said.

It was a silly thing to say, he felt, because it wasn't at all ominous. That was not what he had meant to say. The word had sprung to his lips simply because he wanted to be the first to break the silence ; it was as though any world would have done.

"When I was a girl I used to be afraid of it," she said. "I thought it was a kind of earthquake. I knew a man once who was struck by lightning."

He supposed she was lying, making it up, but he didn't care because most conversation appeared to him in that light, false, artificial, a sort of game of adjustment within the world of another in which what was said was insignificant, the end being to intrude oneself, ineffaceably, to make the other recognise one's existence.

"Was he killed?"

"The man? oh yes, he was killed alright, *instantaneously*, but I was only a girl at the time. I wasn't allowed to see him."

"Did you want to?" Fidler was wondering what a man struck by lightning would look like. Electrocuted. Like they did to murderers in America.

"I really don't know whether I did or not," Miss Lanelly said. "I don't remember. It's funny, but I don't remember. All I know is my father went to his funeral."

"Do you live with your parents now?"

"Oh no, not now!" She was blushing. "They're both dead. I've got a furnished room."

"You're lucky," he said. "I live with my mother and sister."

Kate would be home now and they would be preparing the meal, the ceremony. They would be annoyed at his being late.

"Oh, I don't know," she said. "It gets a bit lonely at times with only Mrs. Whelan to talk to. She's my landlady. She's Irish. And I don't get out much because I don't know many people here."

"Does anyone ever really know anybody?"

"Oh, I don't mean that," she said. "I just mean that I don't know any people. I wasn't born here."

"I *was* born here but I'm just as cut off as you are."

She had put another cigarette in her mouth. He lit it for her. The noise of the rain had diminished, some of the people were moving towards the door.

"Why don't you move?" she said, blowing the first breath of smoke upwards from the fat part of her lower lip. "If you don't like staying with your family you can surely move?"

"I'd have to want to first I suppose. I don't know. I never really thought about it."

"You can't want to move very badly," Miss Lanelly said. "It's up to you after all."

He had the impression that they were drifting away from one another. The néon lighting in the bar was hurting his eyes. One of the long helio globes was flickering, something wrong with the connection.

"I don't want anything very badly," Fidler said. "It's rather pointless" and, saying it, he felt false.

"It's you that's lucky!" Miss Lanelly said. "My God, I want so many things badly!'

He laughed, relieved, although he was not really amused. He felt she wanted it and he was eager to close the rift which he felt the conversation had created between them. He found himself alarmed at the thought of losing abruptly the vague sense of physical intimacy which he derived from sitting close to her in the hot crowded room.

"I thought it would be different after the war," she said suddenly, "but it's not. It's worse if anything."

"How do you mean?" he said.

"I don't know - I just felt it..."

And then she was looking at her watch and saying that Mrs. Whelan would be wondering where she was.

"Yes, the rain seems to be off," he said, standing up.

"And, for goodness sake, stop calling me Miss Lanelly !" she said. "You've known me six years now!"

He smiled and took her arm to lead her through the crowd. He told her to call him James. He was about to put the matchbox into his pocket but it was empty so he threw it away.

—Alexander Trocchi

(From a novel in preparation).

‘as the winds veer and the raft is driven
and the voices’

I

As they cut the wood to build the argosy
the birds flew out from topmost branch.

Sap deep the moral of the wood grows back in sticky shoots
that have the green and white, before the oars
damaged the river with pock-like eddies.

If they were bearded men, long-haired with masons’ eye,
unused to voyaging,   if women sang,   if wooden gods
or gods who lived among the trees were blessed by goats’
blood   ox heart in burning trough   sharp incense roughening
in amber flame,   I know not.

Close to the sea I live with weather cock to catch all winds.

Here you know the land is high, as deep as high,
the daft sea bird between the sun and wave, cliff-fox
quick and musty down the light stung grass,
up from the cities, men, and accidentally a dead man
and his gold, up from the tide.

And here they came :
three ships, three sails, three hundred oars
white into red as twisted in the light thin
as the leaf’s edge, in again, dark bent under darker blue.

The clustered winds speak out between their stays
the men speak out, the names are where they sail,
and at the steering pole clinched hands to mark
sky guided measures into the coma of distance.

. . .

I have seen the white sails of their going,
smelt across the flat sand and grass that cuts the finger
brine, which afterward I tasted, thinking of dolphins,
and the bird that crosses without sound from South to South.

Sunset. The wind drops. From here the earth is flat
that watermen tow up the sun's barge through the steep canal;
the sea quite flat, its edge and sand seem jointed
like a plank split by the sun's meridian.

Now rain across the hills like grey cloth
folds in the halcyon day; its weft a crosswise
climbing wave against the tide, spars of sunlight
into the rainstorm its woof; the stones grate
and sky's rim melts in sky.

I do not doubt kimmerian voyagers made landfall where
my eye is not acute; yet feel no dirt beneath my nails;
see not the guides in linen, lead to white cities on
green hills; but see the fulmar at rain's edge
his wing the doom span of a fish.

. . .

Where will the river lead them,
and after the river, the sea, lead where?

Hispaniola Avalon
or Hesperidies ?

Are there quince enough, and oranges enough,
apple and date, and time enough to eat of, tasting the fruit,

Avalon green of apples
Hesperidies heavy with orange?

And who will bring them home again?

The stars that on the outward way burnt out their past
will they come to their place again?
the wind greaved sea
effaces rudder cut, sucks down the granite, make pulp
beneath green chambers
the sextant or tipped cord with black obsidian a weed
wand guarding nothing but some pearls.

Now it is morning. Over the sea, the darkness shifts
into the noiseless east. Now it is day. High on a figurehead
of cliffs, that leap into the wind like giants in the
corner of a map, appear three figures, who are so brief
they change under the wind, as wind moulds up the cloud
in cumbersome dignities.

They sing. They pass. They hold up to the sun fox-tails
and other talismans like sea bird's wing. Roof top and
copper bird cries out to them across the bands of air.

Where did the river... and after the river, the sea... where did the...

Their shadows melt into a twist of old material;
gone into morning, flown down by cormorants
that skuttle for their food between the waves;
bearing no message.

MORE WORDS THAN MUSIC

Under the benefit of four momentous stars
I begin to write this, my poem, to you,
A mad imaginary girl : in April, time of poems,
With the sun at the lintel of Aries.

So I unbar the magnet and prepare
To set in motion, order, as you skive
Unlimited among that gloomy mass

That is your mask; for you are most adroit
To dodge this cobweb tune.
And skutter dear-words in a heap of noise.

I shall therefore prepare a net of nonsense,
The magnetism spread into the pauses,
Permit the silence, like sun in flaréd
Oval on the leaf, to tread in quiet.

Such letter lattice as Kings of Trezibond
Might get, deft in their slave yards,
Gold swapped for oats, or some Apollo

Muddling the traces of his cart,
That when it rains the moon will shine
And snow upset the balance of a grape.

First; you are fair
        and unaware
        to what degree
        this April
        moves your face.

And next; a swift encroachment of the blood
            poising as blush, a touch of foot
            together with a merriment of wrist,
            assures that tides not thrust
            huge fans of surf for nothing
            on the cliffs of you,
            that all is touchable with equipoise
            and none may to himself touch through.

For king an item ; ten gallivanting corpuscles
                    desert the quiet of your bone;
                    alone, they since along your limbs;
                    give them the will to burnish
                    and they bring imagination to
                    the sullen eye,
                    as june in frost shaft,
                    or genie from mulberry pie.

And last; comes in the spring
            flowers in hair
                        she goes
            lighter through April
            in a suit of green
                    hair curled
            gold into lighter gold
            than April knows.
when opening her eyes
sky time of all its space
gave wide and occasionally
grave light to remain

brighter this spring
by many suns collected
who has attempted
his almost mistress
without image?

Five feet high and some delicate inches.

no more than nephew to my voice
—that serious caprice
—worried in me
fast to ameliorate,
to twist the friction of his memory,
rather than be spinster to the spindle of...

Such aery hazards make a swallow dizzy.

spin, spin, spin,
wheel of my would be mistress
thread of gold:
the gonfanlons of summer
slide numberless and thick down rumplestiltkins ladder.

into the wind with them!
into the nine steep yards of sky!
where prowl the naked kings,
no robe among them,
chilly between their hounds.

comes in the spring.
you at a wheel where
into the wool there winds
splashes of April
twine of the winter flitch:
and it will stretch
to hang the emperor
or play cats-cradle with a witch.

. . .

Now as you spin the rain thuds on my window,
And you from all your flesh are swept
Into a clippered hag who skakes her skud
Adrift in the mysterious snow...

The young Apollo has gone daft to see
His chariot compete with Agol for the
First light on the backside of the moon...

By moonlight, fox reviews the grapes
With a green eye, snaps, as the moon
Hard scraped against the first of month

Drops into darkness, like the busted stars
Delighting Lady of Shallott upon her stool,
Some freezing chyle...

I would lie to pass the hobby of the dark.

Thus: ‘Today we walk the hill
‘Between green swords,
‘And tap the trumpets
‘Of the daffodil,
‘And count the sailing pine.’

split by frost the cone is knocked into the dark
the ice cuts through,
the rain,
spike down the syllabes...
the hail-rain......
the
Fall
Fallen
Strike now the branches into winters breath
The violent twigs thrash at the cloud black
Thresh out the moon in atoms darker
Than the stars. Down in the earth
A river creeps. Deep in riverbank
The mudrat wrapped in leaves sleeps
Till the scratch of spring. Cot
cottage
all the earths appear
inside a polished steel
screwed to a wall without periphery,
a wheel of beech twisted in sunlight
a plate of bevelled fire tapering
outward
—the focus swims
—behind the metal
—swarm innumerable bats

—the beak, the heated velvet
the stoop that cuts the darkness with a shriek,

like shew-stone, like a polished anthracite,
like any lucent thing by lenz brings edge
and make acute the smeared abundance,
the glass
          rain shimmers but hail cuts only
          with the wind's edge, the winds palm...
The
Wooden spokes blur at the knuckles of a crazy
Witch, and rowan trees bear red fruit beyond
The cottage where she sits pursing her lips at
The golden thread, spinning the time when we
Are dead. I watch the berries shrink to glass
As through the trees glided upon their crooked
Wings, her two crows pass (Winter and Summer
She calls these things) I watch, and from the
Grate each mullion wears death's mutilated face.

—Christopher Logue

SUEZ

Was Chephren twenty-eight Royal Cubits less a king
Than mighty Cheops ?
Or had syncretic Dedefra,
Born of the secondary queen,
And mortaring each stone at Roash with human flesh,
Shaken the mighty line of Egypt.

Yet it was Chephren, recumbent lion, guardian of Giza,
Who knotted the waters Cheops loosed
From Abydos to the Fayum,
Made Nile obey his miracles
And fed White Wall Memphis.

        So wore Chephren the Double Crown of Egypt,
        As the craftsmen gangs of Aswan
        Tura and the hills of Mukattan
        Mined forth limestone and granite

                To strengthen the rays of the sun,
                To make the rays a strong ramp under his feet
                That he might mount upon the brow of Ra.

        And Chephren's geometry needed no pastimes,
        Pure were his pillars
        Without lotus or papyrus branches.
        Death walked not on pavements
        Of translucent alabaster like water,
        Under ceilings of birds and stars...

But there was a kingdom to come,
                A new kingdom
And Cairo a place to spit in.

And from Port Said to El Ferdan,
Past Fayed and the Great Bitter Lake
To Suez and the sea,
Who will untie the waters of the new Nile ?

And invert that Pyramid ?

PIEDRO

You saw a man and a snake, Piedro.
    There
    Was a rock
    Where your ancestors read of defeat
    And moved Southwards.
So he died, Piedro.
Dost thou believe in God or the snake ?

You saw a nun and a birth, Piedro.
    There
    Was a cave
    Where the sun fingered at noon.
    So you stayed
And grew old among strangers, Piedro.
Dost thou believe in God or the woman ?

You saw a woman and a child, Piedro.
    There
    Was a white town
    Where two oceans whisper.
    And she wept and it was dead.
So you turned South again, Piedro.
Dost thou believe in God or the South ?

—Patrick Brangwyn

A DANCE FOR DEAD LOVERS

When I saw the moonlight, yes, lacing through the blinds, striping the darkness, bending over the edge of the bed like a streak of paint—that was when I couldn't stand it anymore. It had been all right before when the room was still with the night and I was lying here naked with the quilt almost up to my nose, pressing softly over my breasts, and my legs folded up against my belly. My eyes were closed, although I wasn't sleeping, and I felt warm and comfortable like lying in dry summer grass at home and not hearing a sound sometimes for an hour or more. But then I opened my eyes and saw the moonlight.

What do you think about, he had asked, *when you watch me go down the street at night and the moon has moved opposite your window?*

That was in May, I think, or June, before the summer I know, because he was wearing a plain white polo (he wore it backwards for on the front there was a faded *University of Wisconsin* made into a circle) with only a jacket over it. And now here it is November.

What do you think about, *Succuba*, Tom had said calling me that crazy name, *when you see the moon* ? I knew he was talking poetry again and didn't mean for me to answer. But anyhow I said, I think is it really so round and white and lovely (I was watching him while I talked and I could see his mouth pinched together to show me he was annoyed) and I think it's never as clean-looking in New York as it was in St. Augustine where the air was water-clear. Then he smiled and I knew he would: he always did everytime I mentioned St. Augustine. He used to say it was all a beautiful dream to have been born there, and I would have to tell him how wonderful it was over and over even though I didn't think so.

But he's gone now, of course; went away in September and I haven't heard from him since, and things like moonlight and sad sweet songs and desperate love-pictures that they show at the movie where I work still bother me. I'm glad now I never wrote to mama about him, because the laugh is on me, and all along I was so sure we were going to be married: even before I met him I was sure. It's just something you *know*: maybe it gets whispered into your ear while you're asleep by some dead uncle who can see the whole future of the world.

When I saw the moonlight rolling so gently into the room I started thinking about the whole thing again, so I lifted myself out of the bed and snapped on the one-bulb chandelier. Everything looked different then: the moonlight disappeared just as though I had sliced it away at the window; the bed became narrow and lumpy not one bit as comfortable as it had been when I was lying on it; and the wax-white smell of bacon fat oozed over to me from the wires of the electric stove. It was cold in the room so I lit the stove, and the dim rusty light made the table upon which it stood look fleshy like a girl with her top-half cut away. Then I dressed in my all wool plaid that was the first thing I bought when I'd come to New York. I swung my brown topper round my shoulders, not putting my arms in the sleeves because this way I felt freer, and if there was a wind and the coat rustled it felt like wings. I left the stove on to keep the room warm for when I came back, and since the clock said that it was after one, I guessed I couldn't stay out walking too long.

Tom had oiled the door just before he left and so it locked real quietly which was good because everything else on the floor was still, even the frosted lamps tacked up on the walls made a quiet kind of light. I walked slowly to the staircase but stopped there, for, looking upstairs at the wall opposite the fourth floor, I could plainly see two shadows sitting on the top of the steps. The girl, although I couldn't make her out exactly, I was sure was from the room above mine, who lived with her mother, a hermity old cripple that sat all day in a rocker and when I was home in the afternoon I could go half out of my mind listening to the never-ending *rick-a-rack* from her chair and her ugly scratchy voice talking to the daughter. *Missy*, she calls her. *Now, look here, Missy*, I often hear her say, the rough voice coming through my ceiling. So the poor girl has to keep her boy friends on the steps which always made me and Tom feel good when we could stalk right into my room and stay there private and closed-in. But there she was now doubled up and twisted with heat and making crazy love noises. Just to satisfy my mean streak I banged my heel real hard down on the stone floor: and the shadows ran this way and that like a big sloppy ink blot. Then they straightened up and separated and I clacked my heels noisily down the rest of the three flights and out the building.

I crossed to the Rockefeller Center side of Forty-eighth Street and there in the darkness I looked at the old buildings across the way leaning tight against each other like a crowd of frightened children, and almost all the windows dark as closed eyes, afraid to open and see the big grey Center across the way. I could see my window three flights up in front turned pearl with moonlight. All the stores were shut: the book store, the camera store, the *We-Replace-Record-Shoppe*, the barber, even the restaurant—all closed, except for the bar on the corner of Sixth that Tom used to call the jolly old pub putting on his fake English accent.

We went there three days after I found him at that cute black-painted brick house with the white shutters that reminded me so much of St. Augustine. We sat in the back away from the orange lights and the orange-faced men; we were in the last booth for hours having martinis with olives and he made me talk on and on about the Fountain of Youth that he said was really drenched with tradition. And I had to tell him four times that water from the Fountain was flat as flat before he would believe me. He listened about the willows best, the way they sweep over the houses like thin green feathers, and they look old and tired and wise like the landmarks; you can feel cool and content sometimes lying in their shade and at the same time hate them for wrapping around you and remembering so much about the past (for they live on and on, before and after your life); even the young willows with their tender green seem as if they were born tired and smart. Our house was old and the paint had run off leaving only faded fingery streaks in sore and blistered wood; it was at the south edge of town in the poorer part and always there was the burning smell of tansy weeds that had lovely wild yellow flowers to see, but stung your nose when you came too close. (All the while he listened quietly, sliding his thumb round the martini glass and his mouth turned up in that funny smile; and each time I'd stop he'd begin asking me questions.) After papa died I went to work at the Fountain and I wore a long red dress and a bright yellow band around my waist and I had my ears pricked so I could stick these Gypsy earrings through. There were a lot of things to see: an Indian burying cave done up in smoky blue lights with pieces of skeletons lying everywhere, so cold and damp you shiver just going down there for a minute; and all kinds of cannons and anchors left in St. Augustine by Ponce de Leon years back. The whole city is so full of history you can just scream; signs on every corner saying *on this spot*, and tourists from the big cities never looking at you, but always around you, in back of you. And how can you go on with this feeling that all these things are older and smarter and more important than you, things that don't even live. I felt that no matter how old I got I would never grow up, so mama and I talked it over and we decided that Buddy was old enough to work part-time and in a year or so Florence could start work at the Fountain. Mama was always good to me I guess; she would at least sit and listen, her sad eyes motionless, her small hands folded in the lap of her apron—it always looked like she was wearing the same apron because she had six of them exactly alike: navy blue blackground with a dozen yellow moons floating in it. She cut my hair short and made me promise to send a postcard every week and whatever money I could. We took a taxi to the depot that last day, but mama wouldn't get out of it, only sat there bent over a little with her stringy hair falling around her face like willow limbs until I got on the train.

And the way Tom listened to me!

I turned on Sixth Avenue going downtown; there were still a few people on the street and a little traffic. I passed the small art shop with the picture of Jesus in the window with his eyes closed and they open if you keep staring; but I've seen it so often now that I always catch the eyes open even with just a quick glance. But I looked anyhow at this plain sad face that had some of the neon from the bar across the street tinting it, and the sand-colored beard like soft shreds of tobacco making the face look even sadder. I felt very close to him then: both so lonely with no one really to talk to and no one here to understand us. Those openclosed eyes, calm as a child's, lookingnotlooking at the grown-up city. Quickly I curtsied to him, turning around first to make sure that nobody was watching. Then I continued walking, across Forty-seventh Street, and I felt the wind come up wild and sour and my topper rustled out and the wind made thumping sounds against the lining. I shivered with excitement and it was so strange to see the shops and buildings resting so quietly in spite of the sharp whistles of wind and the silver whispers of moonlight.

Maybe after all it *was* some dead uncle who whispered it to me about him: it couldn't just come to me like that to know that there was a Tom Ellis with absolutely sin-black hair even though his plain long face and large jaw did come as a surprise, and especially the eyes which I expected to be narrow and sort of slanted. But there I was in my stockings and girdle and brassiere fairly shivering to death last February I guess it was, and the tears shimmying down my face and oh I was lonely. And so there I was praying to God crazily in my underwear asking him to send somebody to me or give me some excuse to go home, back again to willows and aprons and the fire-smell of tansy weeds. For a whole month I'd been saying nothing to anybody but *hello* to the people in the house and *two up front, madam?* to the customers in the movie; and I wanted to say *love* or *close* or anything. So I prayed, and suddenly—*crack*!—just as though my ear had been stuffed and now it popped, I heard the name: Tom Ellis. Everything felt better then and I finished dressing in a hurry, just slopping some lipstick on and not even combing my hair, but instead tying a kerchief around my head.

It was February but the day was clear and the sun, white and frozen in the pale sky, made the pavement sparkle. I walked down Forty-eighth to the Whalen's that was crowded with customers for lunch. Everyone was flushed and quiet as they are on a bright cold day. I went to the phone booths in the back and got out the Manhattan directory and turned to the Ellises. There was no Tom Ellis listed except for a Mrs. Thos. R. Ellis and I didn't think Tom would be married. I had a few nickels in my coat pocket so I tried three or four numbers, each time a woman answering.

Hello is Tom there? I asked them and they all said no except for one woman who sounded surprised and said, *Tommy hasn't come home from school yet. Could you tell me who this is ?*

Lillian.

I'm awfully sorry, but I don't think—

Never mind. It doesn't matter. I hung up, my face feeling red and embarrassed and all I could think was why didn't his address get whispered to me along with his name. I left the store and turned toward Broadway; the sun had shifted behind the buildings and the wind scratched by so fast you could almost see it. People seemed to be ballooning out and blowing past me; and I continued walking.

For a whole month—almost right up to spring—I kept walking except when I worked or ate or slept. I never took a subway or a bus not even that afternoon that it snowed up to my ankles and my blue suedes wrinkled up like prunes. For a whole month I passed houses slowly and wondered who was living in them; and often I stopped and stared through bright yellow windows, sudden in the solid wintry darkness; and I looked into men's faces, studying the eyes and the mouth closely to see if I recognized them. In the theater sometimes I would point the flashlight up at a customer and whisper *Tom* but there was always the same cold dead expression like on the skeleton heads of Indians and on the still grey city pavements.

Only once, I remember, a man looked down at me through the flashlight. *Yes*, he said, *I'm Tom.* I became a little nervous and took hold of his arm. *Later*, he whispered, *when the movie lets out. I'll meet you in front.*

I saw him move down the aisle, his shoulders straight, and his hair glittering blonde. Oh I was so sure, but the picture was a long one, and it wasn't until after midnight that I rushed out and found him there. I was disappointed, I admit; his hair was not so blonde as grey, and his cheeks were kind of pouchy. But at first he seemed warm and gentle as we walked along Madison Avenue and turned into a deserted side-street.

Are you sure you're Tom Ellis? The street was narrow and silent, and not a person about.

Of course I am.

He took my hand in his warm one and we walked without talking until he pushed my hand under his coat and pressed my fingers together.

What are you doing? I said.

Don't you like it? His voice sounded thin and fake; and I pulled my hand away and stopped walking.

I don't think you're Tom. I don't think you're Tom.

What if I'm not? he said angrily. *What if I'm Jim or Pete?*

My breath was gone, rolled into a ball and stuck somewhere in my throat, and I turned round and ran forever to the corner of Madison

Avenue. I looked back from there and could see he hadn't moved from the middle of the block.

Toward the end of March I passed the black and white-house with shutters nailed open. There was an iron fence in front of it along the walk, and beside the steps a small ragged garden lay peeled and frozen: wiry rose bushes supported by sticks stood here and there, and right in the middle was a mulberry tree wrapped in an old purple quilt. All at once I got a quick beating in my heart. It was brazen of me, yes, but I stomped right up the steps to the front door that had a large knocker shaped like an empty eye-socket. I snapped open the door and slipped into the small dark foyer. It was washed clean and smelled of CN; a white and brown marble bench stood against the left wall and over it were the apartment bells with the names taped on. I can remember every one: how many times I read them! There was Lewisohn, Hector, Devane, Traurig, Ross, Brill—*supt.*, and two others that must have been Russian or Greek: but no Ellis. I felt weak and sat down for a minute on the marble bench and I would have cried with disappointment but I was afraid someone might come in or out and see me. Then I got up and rang the super's bell and walked down the stuccoed corridor until I heard a door slide open and a tall old lady looked out; she wrinkled her eyebrows so that her eyes looked sharp and dry.

Looking for somebody?

Yes. Tom Ellis. Which apartment is he in ?

No Ellis here. None at all.

Are you sure? And all the time my heart was going wild because I knew this was the house.

Course I'm sure, she said, looking insulted.

When I was in the foyer again, the smell of CN burning my nose, I heard her door slam and I went down the steps and stood in front of the house. After a while snow clouds curtained the sky, and the streets were hushed and colorless. I hurried down the avenue for two blocks trying to keep my mind empty and cold so I would not think until I got home.

Over everything was this thick net of moonlight, thicker now as I reached the wider streets, and all moving things moved more slowly as if caught up in it. Even the wind on Forty-second Street only drifted a little. A patrolman stood at the entrance to Bryant Park and he looked me up and down when he saw me go in and I knew he was watching me circling about. There were few people in the park, all older men, some sitting in a dream, some with faces so anxious it seemed as if they were waiting for a letter that was years late.

Here, the moonlight didn't fall, but slid through the lacey trees weaving between the branches and the twigs, sliding across each empty space and filling it up like loneliness creeping through my body, flowing in my veins. His eyes, shiny as the buttons on his uniform, followed me around the park: they weren't the calm eyes of Jesus, but suspicious grown-up eyes open and staring like skyscraper windows. I came out of the park very slowly looking at his face and I circled around Forty-second Street up to Fifth Avenue and started back home, all the time thinking about his eyes.

Not like Tom's eyes that had been pale and grey and round as raindrops, although actually I thought they would be narrow and slanted. But I knew him when I saw him after coming to that house every other day for two weeks; sometimes I would just stroll by in front and sometimes I would sit in the foyer on the white and brown marble bench and watch the people going in and out. When I saw him it was evening of my day off from the movie and the weather was warm enough to keep my coat open. I was outside in front of the house and I was leaning against the rods of the fence; the door rattled open and the circular knocker chattered a little and out he walked on the steps, holding a cigaret. He stopped and looked down at me, his black hair twisting in the breeze as if he was underwater. It was him oh and I knew it.

Tom, I said. *Tom Ellis.*

His mouth shaped into that mean smile he always had and he said, *I beg your pardon.*

My mouth was sand-dry and felt like I could chew off pieces of my tongue, but fast as I could, my words tumbling out clumsily, I told him how I'd been looking for him for months and I knew he was Tom Ellis. He began to laugh, a soft chuckling laugh, and couldn't stop; I got embarrassed so I started laughing too. Then he shot his cigaret into the garden and came down the steps to me.

Where are you from? You aren't a New York girl.

No, I'm from St. Augustine, Florida. Oh please aren't you Tom? I know you are.

That funny smile left his face and just for a minute he looked puzzled. *But you must understand, young lady, that—*

Lillian. That's my name: Lillian. Oh tell me you're Tom. I know it. I know it.

Lillian, he said, and then his smile came back. Reaching up, he put his finger to my temple, and soft as silk let it slide down my cheek. *If you say so, yes, I'm Tom.*

Suddenly I was scared and couldn't understand the way he was teasing me, and I remembered the other man, the Jim-Pete from the movie. But then Tom closed his eyes and I knew that everything was all right. He took my arm and made a joke, and we walked a couple of blocks to a coffee shop where he ordered tea with cream for himself and didn't drink it but just stirred it the whole hour we sat there. He wasn't very handsome because he looked so strange with his black hair framing his pale eyes and face; but he was smart and educated and always had that smile on his face that sometimes meant pleasure and sometimes meant he thought you were pretty stupid. He smoked one cigaret after the other without stopping: he said it was something he'd picked up from the advertising business, where he worked only because it paid a lot, though he hated it on account of having to spend his days with a collection of imbeciles. And in his spare time he sat in the park—even on the coldest days, and especially if it rained or snowed—and wrote poetry!

I gave him the number of the hall phone when I left and I didn't hear from him for three days, but then he called me and we went to the jolly old pub on Sixth Avenue and talked mostly about me and St. Augustine. He hardly ever talked about himself although we really had so much time to talk, and when he would say something it was always very mysterious and never finished as though he was only part of a person and couldn't talk for the other part, or as though he was half asleep. Once I said, *why aren't you lively and wide awake?* And he whispered: *because you're just a dream, Succuba; even St. Augustine is just a dream.* And now and then to prove to me that he was lively he would straighten the mirror in my room or oil the door or pick up a chair that had turned over while we were dancing.

Lots of times he would begin to speak poetry, that was up in my room mostly before we'd start to make love. He would turn the light off and pull up the blinds and the room would turn creepy blue, and half-naked we would start to dance without any music. It wasn't a regular dance, not backwards and forwards and dipping. but around the room in a circle, and he would begin to talk while I would be getting dizzy.

We move like the stars, he would say, *and the moon and the world, stupidly in a dream; calling it Mars and moon and Mercury and making it what it isn't. And it is all and only for making love, for leaving home and making love with closed blank eyes.*

And on and on he would go talking crazily like that with his large thin lids like wax over his eyes. And he would lead me blindly around the room bumping against the walls, rattling the furniture until we couldn't stand up anymore and we would fall on the bed. Once when we were lying there catching our breath he said: *making love is our only adult quality; it is the only thing that will keep us from going back.* I thought about this a long time that night, but it didn't become any clearer; it only made me sad, and I began to cry. But Tom laughed and stroked me all over so that I would forget this room and the willows and mama's aprons.

He was quiet after that, as he always was when we made love, and towards morning he would get up without a word and go away and not visit me for a week or two. It hurt not seeing him, but I didn't really mind because he would always come back. And all the time he never once said anything I wanted to hear; of course I would try over and over again to force it out of him, but he would just smile and call me Succuba and ask me to tell him about St. Augustine and it would be so good to have him there that after a while I would forget. The last time though, in September, it was important to know; it was important because if he said it I would know that he would always stay with me, and now there would soon be cold and wind like two frost-knives ripping my loneliness open, and I couldn't bear being lonely again, and now I had made love and grown up and I couldn't go home: I didn't even want to go home. So I begged him, Tom, please, Tom, say you love me. But he was quiet lying with his hands folded across his naked belly as though he was praying. Presently he lifted himself up and dressed and came over to me. He bent and kissed my shoulder tenderly not wildly and he looked at me with his mean smile and said, *Tom Ellis loves you.* He touched my breast as if it was a piece of clay, like he was trying to mold it. *I love you, Succuba,* he said and went away.

There on Fifth Avenue with the neon lights of dress shops screaming like little sirens up at the moon I walked to Forty-eighth Street and turned the corner to my building. The girl from upstairs was gone and the shadows were gone, and everything was still ; the door of the hall-toilet was open and I saw the moonlight snowing through the window and lying across the wet wooden floor. I closed the door and then went to my room, warm now and dark except for the red glow from the curled wires of the stove. I turned it off and undressed in the darkness and lay down here on the bed beside the window.

The moonlight is gone of course, moved round the building and even with the blind pulled all the way down there is still this horrible pale darkness. My body is curved into a ball becoming numb with sleep, except my ears: and they are stuffed now, straining to my dead uncle.

—Alfred Chester

QUINTUS MÚCIUS SCÆVOLA : IV.

The harvest is not gathered
      and the golden horn of summer rots the wheat
      ,my reviling confrère
      from the Incoronata:
shouting at my toys and breaking up my masques
      ,tells me incantations
      blinding my perceptions
as now my many daughters have limbs
to show red to the seasons
      ,maidens who have no hearts—
      wedded to an Observantine
whose soul is rock : his intelligence
is with a child's comprehension :
      red is red / black is black,
and the night / bringing sleep—
                  scenting the dark air
                  with coloured indulgences.

With organzine   from the cupola
hangs his heart,   in the ruinéd sacristy
          a wolf curvets
          glib, with his new station.

I have no angels to propitiate
but the crows still love me, with their affection
          I am sat on the cold marble
          ,*maleficii*
now I remember the Eastern Cities
          and the quacksalvers' ministrations.

Then came down onto the marshes, his
                        creatures and allies

sweetening their growing places :
he / with his *lo stato*
,young gods
have no temples
and the tempers of young and agéd
stolid and uncomplaining—
they
who are ever increasing
they
with their gods and their gods
give them barrier from population
,pest and rain and light
down
on their reflecting houses.

Came a whitening host fresh
from the mountains
fertile / friendly
to a rough greening start
in the *peperino*—
new salt in the rivers
and new iron in the towers:
poor / poor
in a constitutional idea—they who are
taught at the listening tubes
and seen into their vineyards
,there at the grape-breast
was one more nimble
,replete
astride his brother's shoulders.

This I have known
and I am the alleviator
that is called gentle *il moro*
,salt and honey
honey and that
bursting out of a ready furrow:
that these
are not necessarily *prezzi salati* and these
coming not
from my clowning angel
nor feasting down the long dread table.

I have seen this
for I am the lawful bastard

that is called the unbeliever :
jamais homme cruel ne fut hardi
,yet in this oil and through this oil
my daily paste into is come into your houses
,have known and that that is a sickness
and not from their rivers not from their waters
for these have given them cities
and these have given them ancestry—idle, they prosper—
let occasional blood thicken their wheat,
let pruning and wit pamper their grapestems :
here gather, there sit, then
kneel in communion
et incarnatus est
with bane with dagger with stone
with dark passage, flute, bell—
come hangman ! come, vulture.

And one
let him be / Perdix
honoured the profligate
his rash ungovernéd acts of the chamber
the bed, the limber—
who is he? tempering lust with equity?
,or what means *vendetta*
or *jus talionis*? or satisfaction?
or warm blood on their hidden altars?

This I have seen
and I am he that is called Laius / Laius
and I am the emancipator
settling the lovely poison of equity
along the thighs of the olive tree—
who amongst you? whether
from the theroid arbutus or the evergreen
who has cut-root?
and who has been evading just tithes? done,
then call all this / equity.

Do not label satisfaction equity
nor cast sorrowing war into your oil
nor make your water into the virgin rivers
,these have given you cities
and these have flooded the cities of princes, these

are dark with the spices and ointments
of / equity
and no good has come into your orchards, nor
good wine from their fruits—
here idle, there reap:
now water the furrow.

Now there are new fashions for hell and purgatory:
(sweet huskéd-child
whose voice / rings with sweet growing)

There is a new ethic-*malie*
(sweet corn-child
whose voice rings / with sweet-growing)

And with preaching and prating
my vines are waving halberds
in the green of my gardens
in the queen of my orchards
,the enemies of good
of pity
of mercy.

misericordia!
The old gods are dead.

—H. Charles Hatcher

III. FALSTAFF:

There was one, Falstaff, a gentle knight of England—

Ho then Harry, thou mincing hound!
must thou swear thus
          tear thus at all my tapestries?
Dost thou think I paint with my foot, all allegro?
          a forked lightning?
Because thou com'st creeping
from the strong cream gut of Bella Forbes
all wet with woman's parts, wild wombwaters
God man ! dost thou think to say
          howl all hell down on my tapestries!

Because two farts maketh no poem
Dost thou think two bellies cannot?

Have at thee hairs, Harry!
Dost think her amulet did not growl at thee?
was't not articulate?
was not her gut open like Christ's own wound
          a dark firmament?
Aye, and a lute too that played for thee!
Where's thy resilience?
The sweat of it! was there not shock sigh song enough
for Orpheus himself ?
          Bella's wars, Harry
          bella's wars...
Wer't thou not weaned that thy wick's so wordless?
          bella's wars, aye
and known more wars in that vast vagina of hers
than candle's been lit for the Virgin.
          Dost thou question her techniques
          her tupturtling
          her shinplay juberoll and abdomenal shudders?

Gob !
What's poetry but such an intricate reaction?
Where's such poetry in all my tapestries?

Did'st know old Gaunt who had his crop clipped?
        a very plough!
        turned back more earth
earthed more urns than the Ram himself!
Where did'st thou think he learned his wars
        from his duty captain?
God knows some say so, boy, it's said in court
        a sad clout to his memory
Not a whisper, boy, of a tent in Tartary...

Thou remind'st me of the tent-weaver
he made a rattle of Christ's bones
        and drew the juice from mangoes,
trees ? they're curs'd for Christ that staked him—
fie, Hal, fie on thee unciorn !
will ye shave the lion and call it Purity?

I heard a song once, Hal
'twas very neatly turned as I remember
sung by a hotsweet wench with black hair
black eyes'd unfrock the Pope, near gave us gravel!
a most admirable and winsome dialectic!

Light on her limbs who is not faithless
        But tormenteth,
    Yet is some ease to sing;
Sun, in your rising through the corn,
        Let forsworn,
    Thy yellow radiance be felt
        Upon her skin;
And warm to melt her faithfuless,
        In her sweet self.

Lay thou upon her bed vague moon
        Nightbird, tune
        On her whitening limbs
A thread of silver ravishment,
        Who is intent
    Her sleep before to see
        Tho' carelessly

Arrayed to leave a shoulder bare;
      Night's end, with her virginitie.

The very salamander, Hal
            I was as high as an ass's turd!
Absolute substance, say's I, nor man gainsaid me
such theological juice
did't sing for Aquinas or the good St. Bernard
would unheretic an heretic, aye, even me Hal!
though I light candles only to excavate my way
to the fourposter,
It's God's good work, say's I, spite of the bulls
            spite that learned prejudice
            concerning *amator ardentior*
God's good work, the very essence of religion,
of Ovid and Capellanus (Love's chaplain he was)—
but then she danced, Hal !
skirt flying and legs apart
            thine for the asking !
In all the world there's no such warm dichotomy!

            Another flagon, Hal
            for thy old friend,
'tis more exactly sustaining than pig's blood
they say the Devil rides to it in metamorphosis
and 'twas a succubus, young Meg says
            who fathom'd her yesternight
How ? said I
Fart, said she ('tis a vulgar thing, that Meg
born in a bawdyhouse,
I have it on capital information
'tis surprise to me she changed her lodgings)
A goat ? said I
Aye, horn'd, said she, but none of thy fourlegg'd variety
with such a cod'spiece I thought I'd burst my sides !
            Such a tongue, Hal, such a tongue !
            and young, Hal
I swear I don't know that the world's coming to...

For myself, and of conviction, Hal
I will take unto me only virgins
that their diurnal spoor be fresh and sweetsmelling
their softer parts immaculate as pomegranates
            certainly at the solstices

and the heat of the sun being far off
I am not, to speak precisely, pole-axed by twin heats
        into a tart's bed...

Old, Hal, old...
forgive me if I talk too much
'tis my only vice, my addiction to metaphysics
        my logos and lexikon,
but for an old man, Hal, 'tis fitness,
justice, or, as Plato had it, DIKAIOSUNE

What ?
Who ?
Meg !
Me !   (Excuse me, Hal...)
Coming Meg !
Coming my chicken... !

—James Fidler

SOME ASPECTS OF EXISTENTIALISM

I

My object in this paper is not primarily to refute, and still less to defend, the so-called philosophy of Existentialism, but to try very briefly to explain what its main principles are and how it has achieved so much success. In England, indeed, it is not yet very popular, and I doubt if it ever will be, in spite of the current vogue for the novels and plays of M. Jean-Paul Sartre ; but it was the dominant philosophy in Germany between the two wars, and, with M. Sartre as its most vociferous apostle, has, since the war, become the fashion in France. M. Sartre himself is an accomplished man of letters and much the most readable of the official Existentialists, but he is not an original philosopher : his philosophical ideas are chiefly borrowed from the German philosopher Martin Heidegger ; and Heidegger, in his turn, is considerably indebted to his teacher Edmund Husserl, who invented, or claimed to have invented, a new method in philosophy to which he gave the name of "phenomenology". An important feature of this method was the prominence given to an activity described as the intuition of essences, and it is with this revival of the medieval antithesis between essence and existence that Existentialism begins.

II

The fundamental thesis of the Existentialists, to which indeed they owe their name, is that the existence of a human being is prior to his essence. The difficulty with this proposition, as with so many of the propositions that the Existentialists put forward, is to give it a precise meaning. In one sense, indeed, it is obviously true that existence precedes essence, for it is logically necessary that anything which actually has a specific character should exist. But this is a trivial proposition and it does not apply exclusively to human beings. It is just as necessary that a tea-pot should exist if it is actually to contain tea as that a man should exist if he is actually to have the character of being rational, assuming that to be part of the definition of a man. In another sense, however, it is obviously false that existence precedes essence ; for a noun may have a meaning and so describe an "essence," if that is the way one chooses to put it, even though there exists nothing that it denotes. The word "unicorn" has a meaning, by which it can be differentiated from the word "camel" or "fountain-pen" or "centaur", even though there are in fact no unicorns ; and, similarly, the meaning of the word "man" is independent of the fact that there are men. Admittedly there is a sense in which no word has a meaning unless somebody uses it ; so that, assuming that only human beings use language, their existence is causally necessary for the word "man", or indeed for any other word, to have a meaning ; and since to talk about the essence of things is merely another way of talking about the meaning of words, it can similarly be said that the existence of human beings is causally necessary for anything to have an essence. But it by no means follows from this that it is part of the definition of man that any man should exist. Nothing exists by definition ; and though it is impossible to say of anything that it exists without describing it, it is perfectly possible that things should exist which have never in fact been described. In this sense, therefore, existence neither precedes nor succeeds essence ; they are logically independent of one another.

But what is it, then, that the Existentialists wish to assert when they claim that the existence of human beings is prior to their essence ? Partly, I think, that the behaviour of human beings is not determinable *a priori* ; that however much or little may be included in the definition of a man, there can be no logical guarantee that anything will correspond to it. And this proposition is true, though its application is not restricted to human beings ; it is a general truth concerning all matters of fact. But the Existentialist thesis, if I understand it rightly, goes very much beyond this. For what it appears to involve is that in the field of consciousness no generalization of any kind is valid—or, in other words, that each individual consciousness is a law unto itself ; and this proposition is highly dubious. One obvious objection to it is that to say that the activities of conscious beings are not subject to any valid form of generalization is itself to make a generalization which is supposed to be valid for all conscious beings. But this may be met by distinguishing different orders of generalization, and what the Existentialists may then be understood to claim is that no generalization of the first order is valid for all conscious beings, this proposition being itself a valid generalization of the second order. Nevertheless, even this more modest statement, though not self-refuting, appears extremely arbitrary. For why should the conscious activities of a human being be any less susceptible to general laws than the constitution of a plant or the motions of a star ? And however little one may think of the achievements of psychologists, it is surely doing them a great deal less than justice to deny to their subject even the possibility of becoming a science. Admittedly, they have not brought their researches to a point where they can succeed in predicting a person's behaviour in every detail ; but this is not to say that they are unable to predict it at all. And in so far as their predictions are successful, the general hypotheses upon which they are based may be allowed to be valid. The fact that they are empirically verified does not of course render them unassailable ; there is always the possibility of their failing to meet the test of further experience. But this is equally true of the laws of every natural science, so that it is not in itself a ground for denying to the "social" sciences the same status as the others.

Now I do not suppose that an Existentialist would deny that human behaviour could be in some degree predicted, or that such prediction might be rational, in the sense that it was based upon general propositions which had at least the form of scientific laws. If he were to do so, he could be refuted by a simple appeal to the facts. But, allowing that he admitted the facts in question, I think he would still go on to say that they did not invalidate his case. For he would argue that the fact that a person's conscious activities could be in some degree predicted did not imply that they were subject to natural law. In similar environments people tend to form similar habits, and these habits may attain a high degree of constancy, both in the life of the individual and as between person and person. But this does not mean, so our Existentialist would argue, either that the individual is determined by his environment or that the behaviour of any one person can supply a law for that of any other. A person may be influenced by his environment, but he is not determined by it. He remains absolutely free, and it is merely a statistical fact that in similar conditions different human beings employ their absolute freedom in similar ways. It is this statistical fact that makes the social sciences possible, but it is regarded apparently as a lucky, or unlucky, accident, according to the way one chooses to view it ; and it is held not to invalidate the thesis that every conscious being is, at every moment of his existence, an absolute law unto himself.

At this point, however, it becomes difficult, to see what we are meant to understand by "being determined". For the antithesis between causal and statistical laws is not of fundamental importance ; both describe regularities of behaviour, and in any branch of science the causal laws can always be brought under the category of statistical laws as limiting cases. Accordingly, to deny that the behaviour of conscious beings is subject to natural laws, while allowing that it may exhibit a discoverable pattern, is to use the word "law" in a way in which no scientist would use it. If absolute freedom is consistent with regularity of behaviour to any degree of regularity, then not only conscious beings but material particles are absolutely free. The word "freedom," indeed, is emptied of all empirical content, and the exclusive attribution of it to human beings does not serve to distinguish them from anything else.

In the face of such an objection the Existentialist would be likely to fall back upon a metaphysical argument. He would draw a distinction between things that exist "in themselves" and things that exist "for themselves." Inanimate objects exist "in themselves" ; they are what they are, and that is all there is to it. But consciousness exists "for itself," in the sense that to be conscious is not merely to be conscious *of* something, but to be conscious of something self-consciously. Thus, to use an example of Sartre's which I take from the Introduction to his *L'être et le néant :* "Just as an extended object is bound to exist in three dimensions, so an intention, a pleasure, a pain, can exist only as immediately conscious of themselves... The pleasure cannot be distinguished, even logically, from the consciousness of pleasure... There is one indivisible indissoluble being, not a substance supporting its qualities like lesser beings, but a being which is existence through and through. The pleasure is the being of the self-consciousness and the self-consciousness is the law of the pleasure's being." And from such obscure and dubious pronouncements Sartre infers, without any evident justification, that while there can be consciousness of law there can be no laws of consciousness, and that it is impossible to assign to a state of consciousness any other motivation than itself. For otherwise, he says, one would have to assume that the consciousness, in so far as it was an effect, was not self-conscious. But being, as it is, self-conscious, it can be limited only by itself.

This is a typically Existentialist piece of reasoning and one that I find very difficult to follow. For, in the first place, it does not seem to me to be true that every so-called state of consciousness is experienced self-consciously ; and, secondly, even if this were true, I cannot see why these self-conscious states should not be as much subject to natural causes as anything else. The trouble is, I think, that the Existentialists have never seriously analysed their notion of consciousness. To say, for example, as they do, that what is conscious of itself must be an object to itself and, being an object to itself, must be divided from itself, is merely to play tricks with words ; yet it is on arguments such as this that their whole conception of consciousness as something which escapes the law of identity, as a type of being which "is what it is not and is not what it is," appears to me to rest.

III

It is, then, from this esoteric and, to my mind, unconvincing treatment of consciousness that the Existentialist doctrine of freedom is supposed to be derived ; but the two can be considered independently, and it is the doctrine of freedom, rather than the shady metaphysics on which it is based, that has won for Existentialism the majority of its adherents. At the same time this doctrine is, as we have seen, itself by no means precise. It can be taken in various ways ; and it is precisely for this reason, because there can be something in it for almost everybody except a strict logician, that it exercises so widespread an appeal.

Thus, according to one interpretation, the fact that each individual is a law unto himself implies that he is bound to assume responsibility for his acts, and not only for his own acts but for those of all other human beings. For in choosing his scheme of values he legislates also for others. He lays down a moral law, which as such, has universal application. Neither can he avoid this responsibility. For to repudiate it is still to shoulder it ; to refuse to choose is itself to make a choice. A man is bound to live in accordance with some principle or other, even if it be only the principle of having no principles. He is not determined to choose in one way rather than another, nor are there any objective values to guide his choice. He chooses freely, and in setting up a standard for himself he chooses for all other men besides. Since they are also free agents, they are in no way bound to make the same choice for themselves. But this does not diminish his responsibility. What we have here, in short, is an echo of the Kantian principle of universality without the Kantian doctrine of the harmony of moral ends.

By those who, like Sartre, reason in this way a great deal is made of the fact that every human being is "committed" ("*engagé*"). They talk indeed as if this were itself a moral principle, as if to abstain from committing oneself were the one and only cardinal sin. But this is an obvious inconsistency. For to say that one ought to commit oneself implies that it is possible to do otherwise. There is no sense in urging people to do something that they are inevitably doing already. But the doctrine is that one is *necessarily* committed. There is no way in which one can escape involving oneself if the refusal to choose is itself to be regarded as a form of choice. The responsibility is inescapably there, whether one recognizes it or not. But what the Existentialists apparently fail to see is that in making this burden of responsibility a necesary feature of all human experience they empty it of all significant content. If I fulfil my responsibility as a human being no matter what I do, then this responsibility is not a charge upon me. I am not required to act in any one way rather than another. The denial of Determinism is significant, or at any rate could be made so. But given this initial postulate, then all that the doctrine of "*engagement*" comes to is that I choose to behave as I choose to behave.

Logically, therefore, this talk about "*engagement*" adds nothing to the thesis of personal responsibility, but psychologically it tends to strengthen it. On the other hand, the thesis is very much weakened, both logically and psychologically, when it is combined, as it apparently is by Sartre, with another Existentialist doctrine, the belief in the universal prevalence of insincerity or "*mauvaise foi*". And in his treatment of this question he makes the same mistake as in dealing with the question of "*engagement*". Thus one might put forward the proposition that every human action was insincere as a psychological generalization, and in that case it would be intelligible, though not very plausible. The conclusion which one would expect to reach by an impartial examination of the empirical facts would be that people were sincere on some occasions but not on others, and that different people were sincere or insincere in varying degrees. But this is not Sartre's method of approach. On the contrary, he maintains dogmatically that every human action is *necessarily* insincere, and he reaches this conclusion *a priori* as a deduction from the very nature of consciousness. But if it is to be said that insincerity is a necessary feature of all human conduct, if, whatever I do, I am equally to be convicted of insincerity, then here again the notion of insincerity loses all significance. It only makes sense to charge a person with dishonesty if it is at any rate logically conceivable that he should be honest. But if there is no possible line of conduct that is describable as "being honest with oneself," then to say of someone that he is dishonest with himself is to say nothing at all. It does not in any way identify his behaviour, since however he were to behave the same description would apply. As it happens, the characters in Sartre's novels do tend to behave in ways that would ordinarily be described as insincere ; but what makes them of interest is the fact that their behaviour is exceptional. It may indeed be argued that many actions which appear to be sincere are really not so, that the practice of self-deception is much more common than is ordinarily supposed. But even if this be granted as an empirical fact, the possibility of sincerity still remains open, and it is only because it still remains open that the charge of insincerity has any empirical significance.

IV

There are no objective values, nor has life any meaning in itself. It has only the meaning that each individual chooses to give it. And this again may be taken to support the thesis of personal responsibility. There are, however, many Existentialists who take it otherwise. They agree that all human actions are free ; but what they infer from this is that they are completely arbitrary. It is all very well to say that a man who acts freely thereby becomes accountable for what he does ; but if his freedom is absolute there is no reason why he should act in any one way rather than another ; nothing determines his choice, and in that sense he is entirely unaccountable. Furthermore, if life has no meaning in itself, then any meaning that we choose to give it will again be arbitrary. There is no such thing as human salvation. We may place our values where we choose, but the world in itself remains alien and indifferent.

To support this somewhat self-conscious pessimism a further recourse is had to metaphysics. Thus it is maintained that what each human being supremely desires is to become an object in himself while remaining an object for himself. But, since these two modes of being are mutually exclusive, this end is unattainable, and it is part of the tragedy of man that the very nature of his consciousness obliges him to pursue it. Again, in relation to others, what every one is supposed to desire is to enter into the being of another person without ceasing to be himself ; but this also is a logical impossibility, and since it is held that all one's emotional relationships involve this desire, the inference drawn is that they are all doomed to frustration. The logical answer to this is that if an end is so defined as to be self-contradictory, there is nothing either surprising or tragic about the fact that it cannot be realized. Nor is it easy to see how the compulsion to pursue unattainable ends is supposed to be reconciled with the doctrine of human freedom, But it is not the habit of Existentialists to concern themselves overmuch with logic. What they strive for and obtain is an emotional effect.

As we have seen, this emotional effect may be either optimistic in tendency, as stressing the dignity of man, or pessimistic, as stressing the fact that he has no resource beyond himself ; and on the whole it is the pessimistic strain that predominates. It is, moreover, reinforced by a peculiar doctrine of negation, which is founded on the elementary logical mistake of treating the word "nothing" as a name. Thus Heidegger, in his famous lecture on metaphysics, *Was ist Metaphysik?*, starts out with the proposition that all science, and all human action, is concerned with what exists, with Being, with Being alone, and with *nothing* else. But then, he asks, What about this Nothing ? Science wishes to know nothing about the Nothing ; but does not this imply that the Nothing is known at least as that about which there is nothing that science wishes to know ? How indeed could we even speak about the Nothing if we did not know it ? But what *is* the Nothing ? Since any answer to this question must take the form of saying that Nothing is something, Heidegger himself admits that it is meaningless. But this does not deter him. Logically, neither question nor answer has any meaning. But so much the worse for logic ; and he goes on happily to say that the Nothing is the negation of the totality of Being. Thus, to apprehend Nothing is to apprehend the totality of Being as that which is negated, and since, in Heidegger's opinion, the purpose of metaphysics is to study the whole of Being as a whole, he is able to conclude that the metaphysician fulfils his function by attaining to the apprehension of Nothing. There remains the question how this is to be achieved, and Heidegger's answer is that it is to be achieved through the experience of "*Angst*," a word for which I do not think that there is any English equivalent. "Anxiety" is too weak, "anguish" is too much linked with the idea of suffering ; there is indeed a suggestion of agony, but it is the agony of fear, a fear that has no specific object. Anyhow, it is *Angst* that reveals the nothing, not as a thing alongside Being, but as the condition of the possibility of Being for us. "In the clear night of the nothingness of *Angst* there first arises the original manifestation of Being as such ; that it is Being and not nothing." And much more to the same effect.

It would be futile to try to extract any factual significance from these pronouncements, and tedious to expose all the logical fallacies that they involve. What is important about them is not any pretension to scientific truth, but the emotional attitude that they represent and the emotional appeal that they exert. As sentences taken in isolation they may appear to be so much gibberish, particularly when exposed to the malicious test of a literal translation, but their cumulative effect is in a curious way poetic. It is a poetry of nihilism, the expression of an irrationalist world-outlook, which reflects a certain tendency of the times. It can, for example, be brought into relation with the Vitalism of Bergson, whose theory of time is largely reproduced by Heidegger, and it finds a literary echo in the work of D. H. Lawrence, the English apostle of visceral intuition, the dark knowledge of the blood. To disappointed seers after God it offers a religion of man, not indeed in the ordinary humanistic sense, but rather in the Fichtean tradition of "The world is my world," from which it is only a short step to "The world is my idea" ; and with its exaltation of the Void it gives a certain show of dignity to failure, a consolation to all those who, for one reason or another, are unwilling to accept the world as it actually is.

There is always a market for such irrationalist philosophies ; but there are certain times and places to which they are especially well adapted. It is not surprising, therefore, that Heidegger should have made his name in Germany in the 'twenties, or that his imitator, Sartre, should have come into prominence after the defeat of France. To say this is not to put forward an argument either for or against Existentialism. In any case, as we have seen, it is not the sort of philosophy that either challenges or stands the test of argument. But it does point the way to a political explanation of its success.

—A. J. Ayer

The editor wishes to thank "The Rationalist Annual" *and* "Watts and Co.", *for permission to reprint Mr. Ayer's article.*

A definitive commentary on the first of the
PISAN CANTOS
will appear in Number Two of MERLIN
by Alan Neame and Christopher Logue

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EDITORIAL

It is not sufficient to deplore the state of modern writing in general. Who is bad, and why? Generalised obloquy is not enough.

MERLIN would not exist if its publisher and its editor did not believe that good writing was being written. It is the editor's object to find that good writing, some of which he believes was printed in MERLIN Number One, and to publish it.

Some ways of talking about literature are more useful than other ways of talking about literature. All ways of talking involve the use of distinctions. That is alright so long as those distinctions are not allowed to *harden*, that is to say, if we abandon them as soon as they cease to be useful. Most of the traditional categories are merely distinctions, hallowed by antiquity, which have been allowed to harden, and which, in the hands of unscience, have become an inquisitorial rack to which the flesh of contemporary writing is to be twisted. James Joyce's *Ulysses* broke one rack for the intelligent; they saw that it did not amount to much to say that it was not a novel, the significant point being that it was obviously a great work of genius. That was more than could be said for the productions of most of his contemporaries. Since then there have been other instances of rack-breaking; instances, but the principle does not appear to have been grasped, even by the intelligent reading public. That principle may be stated simply: *all categories are utilitarian; when they cease to be recognised as such, they become abnoxious.*

The categories die hard. Their utilitarian nature has been obscured by the poet's mistrust of, and his ignorance of the methods of, science. The floundering octopus of metaphysics has, quite naturally, made things worse. The poet was a useful ally against an intelligent approach to the universe. But now, in 1952, it is high time the poet let "big brother" sink. *The experience of the poet and the experience of the scientist are not mutually contradictory.*

It is by a suspension of (or a failure to achieve) the scientific habit of mind that the poet attains that immediacy of experience which was natural to the primitive who experienced time, for example, concretely and promiscuously, as periodicity and rhythm. For the poet, *qua* poet, time is not a concept; it is something in which he is emotionally involved.

The poetic habit of mind is an archaic one. The poet is situated beyond the problematical in a personal cosmos whose vital centre he is and which grows away from him on all sides into the warm flanks of *mystery*.

This mystery is inexpugnable.

But it is so simply because it is not a problem. Mystery cannot legitimately be said to be either *known* or *not known*. There is nothing suprarational about it. It is merely non-rational, logically neutral. The cosmos which contains it is, figuratively, the shadow of the poet himself; it is the colour, the complex vibration of his own emotions. It is a private *expressional* cosmos.

That cosmos has no relation whatsoever to, nor does it invalidate nor make nonsense of, the cosmos of exact science. The cosmos of exact science, in so far as it is valid (i.e. in so far as it can claim to be true or false) is purely *descriptive*. It is vital at the beginning to understand that the poetic experience is not valid in this sense, that being an expressive reaction towards something it simply *is* and is neither true nor false.

The poetic experience *is*. But it is also more or less formalized, and thus it has a technical aspect and thus there are problems of poetry. Scientific criticism must restrict itself to those problems and to the description of how they have or have not been solved by this or that poet. As soon as it encroaches on the personal cosmos of the poet, evaluating this or that content *out of relation to the work itself*, it ceases to be descriptive and becomes expression of the second order. Most so-called scientific criticism is second-order expression. The critical utterances of Henry Miller, which make no pretence of being scientific, differ only in degree from those of his detractors. At the same time, his are more engaging because, unlike them, he makes no solemn or pedantic allusion to the critical machinery of Aristotle. His "information" comes directly from the Holy Ghost. We can accept it for what it is.

Poetry may well be *in its expressive content* "a criticism of life": a science dare not have such a content.

The expressive element clings to most literary categories with the pertinacity of an old wart, is so embedded in some instances that category and fungus are indistinguishable. Certain words—the scientist has discarded many of them—handed down to us from primitive times (and still current in the press, the schools, the law courts) have pernicious structural implications. They reflect the assumptions of unscience in past epochs, strangle thought, and give structure to human institutions (honoured, God help us! for their antiquity) which, likewise false to facts, are the more pernicious because of the authority vested in them.

To think we must use language. Language is, from the point of view of meaning, a system of implicatory relations, an apparatus for thinking with. If the apparatus is faulty, if certain implications are stultifying—and 20th century science has proven them to be so—then language itself can be the greatest obstruction to clear thinking. It is not only literature which suffers when the poet allies himself with the metaphysician against science.

No one asks the poet to give up writing poetry; what is demanded is that he should recognise for once and for all that it is poetry that he is writing, that he is dealing with what is emotionally significant and not necessarily with propositions which are true or false. As for the critic, let him distinguish second-order expression from science; when he has done this there is no danger in either.

MERLIN will hit at all clots of rigid categories in criticism and life, and at all that is unintelligently partisan.

To say that MERLIN is against obscurantism in criticism is not to say that it is against obscurity in poetry.

MERLIN is for any innovation in creative writing which renders creative writing more expressive.

Paris, 15 September 1952.

CURREN'S PURSUIT

They were two old people who walked slowly arm in arm. When Little Curren first saw them he tapped his companion on the elbow and said, "Look!—it's surprising that people can reach such an age—and for two of them to achieve so many years together!" To see them was to open a nutshell in which one had expected to discover only one nut and to find it, with small variation, paired. Sullivan shifted and said with dismay, "What are they doing here?"

"Why," Little Curren asked, "You don't know them—"

"Good gracious no—what could I want knowing them! But this monster of a city—it's dangerous, for them; as a forest for me!

The old couple had just crossed the road. They walked very carefully clinging on to each other with gentle prudence and continually looking about at the furiously milling traffic of motor-cars and buses and bicycles. Nevertheless they were able to pass through it satisfactorily and to step cautiously over the gutter, continuing along the pavement steadily and unmoved.

"How grim they are," said Little Curren.

"But how frail," said Sullivan.

"Let's follow them," Little Curren said.

"No, no—have you ever put your hand to an insect's wing—gossamer!—what! if you approached them they'd wither, they'd crackle. There's no life there for you."

"I want to see more of them," Little Curren announced.

"Go, go," his companion encouraged him, "they'll sense the microscope in your eye before you've moved a yard—they'll turn and vanish—or call a policeman. I shall stay here at a distance; on the proper side of the tomb."

Little Curren smiled. "Stay where you want to—I shall be kind, I shall keep a distance too; and you can drink coffee until I come back—or you're tired of waiting."

"I'll be here—waiting never wearies me, I'm interested always—and when the crowds have gone I shall speculate about you."

"Yes—If you can! Although I'll be gone only three minutes, only to catch another glimpse; good-bye!"

Sullivan moved his hand slightly in return and watched his friend leave. But they had talked of it too long, they had discussed a sudden caprice as if it were a long-meditated expedition and his eyes hardly bothered to hold his friend's figure at all before they moved again to examine the polished surface of the coffee-table marred now by the two slowly drying rings of coffee where a little while ago their cups had been. Sullivan's usual sense of humaneness ebbed and he felt immobilized so that some obscure impulse called him to tap sharply on the table with his knuckles, and that noise, in turn, of a refreshing solidity made his thoughts jump with it so that he forgot Little Curren and looked upwards at the sky, where white wisps high up scudded across in the sunlight, and became relieved until he was interrupted by a waiter saying, "another coffee?" and remembered the two knuckle-taps which the waiter had misinterpreted; he collected himself momentarily and said, "yes, yes please." Nudged away from his wandering thought by the waiter's interjection that compelled him to enter into direct relation with things, with people, the surrounding voices, he did not relapse to his previous state, he looked and watched and drew the actual scene into awareness—the tables closely grouped on the spacious pavement, a corner pavement and thus unusually wide, were not all occupied, but many were and this part of town was busy, was in fact a raging hooting bustle, the pattern of seated people was never constant, it shifted, bunched, left spaces that were quickly filled and quickly produced other spaces, four or five adjacent tables barren for a moment, then the clustered points from which again there came the sound of voices.

It was late afternoon, the city-day's last frenzy was high, a high din that the deepening sky compelled to a presage of fatigue, the final race before work and engines slowed and stopped. Sullivan sat through the late roar, unmoving during the noise for an hour until the hum had fallen, twilight and eventually darkness moved in heavily over the city.

At the next table a couple murmered; the girl said, "Look at his face, isn't he serious! Look at his frown. I wonder what he's thinking about!"

"You probably," her admirer whispered gallantly, "He's probably jealous!"

"Silly!" the girl fluttered and giggled. The young man chuckled with her.

A lordly young gentleman a few tables away called the waiter and his eyes stayed lightly for a moment or two on the girl and the elegant young man before he returned to his newspaper, crackling it importantly as he searched for interesting passages.

A graceful woman sitting at an empty table wondered if the man with the newspaper might not be part of the same "set" to which she, personally, was tired of belonging although one had to incorporate oneself into some activity, a solitary life apart became even too solitary and although she usually submitted to her acquaintances' idea of dignity she would have liked to rise and speak to him. His aspect, his tone, his manner gave out "experience"—or at least it could not expect one to maintain the wearying standard of life in girdles, the preliminary irritations of sparring coquetry before time and familiarity foretold an honest exchange; perhaps he would notice her and allow himself to make some sign she could interpret or, even, misinterpret. She hoped so. If not she might always find an excuse to speak to him herself. But would she have the courage to use it? Perhaps she would.

"Waiting for someone, sir?" the waiter asked conversationally, and set a cup of coffee before him. Sullivan seemed for a moment not to hear, but as the saucer clinked on the table he said non-committally, "I'm not quite sure; yes, I suppose I am." And a smile made a short amiable passage over his lips. The waiter stared for a moment, then, "Oh well, it's a pleasant evening," looking up at the sky as if this had just occurred to him—he paused to give the remark its full significance before moving suavely to another table; leaving Sullivan to become aware that he took pleasure in his sense of the affairs alive around him, his perception of the undercurrents of activity in which he was an active part through his mere, his sheer human solidity, a latent changer if only now a quiet observer of the submerged scenes about him and, indeed, moving through him. What more interesting? he mused—Little Curren had no need to chase off in that unruly way after—after wild geese! He would have been as intrigued—if his sympathies are so alert—had he stayed! And when he noticed the man with the fine manner, the newspaper in one gloved hand, leave at the same time as the woman who had sat near him and who could have been his synonym in the other sex, he watched sympathetically to see if they had known each other or if it was only an accident that they parted almost simultaneously. He thought that they had but they were beyond the corner before he could be sure—their not having actually exchanged, so far as he could see, any words, might merely have been the preliminary pause before speaking while they became adjusted to the change of situation from the café to the street, the unfamiliarity of walking for the first time along the pavement together, might have been more ordinary, they may simply have been adjusting their gloves—unless, of course, he was mistaken and, once round the corner, they made each in different directions according to arrangements finally decided perhaps weeks ago—one could not know, he admitted, and was content to admit it, his half-articulate enquiry coloured by the vaguest tinge of approval that a small spontaneous discord had been admitted to his store of smooth dull certainty. His understanding became veiled by intricate strands of association, lost or astray and picking confusedly where, for an instant, the strands were clear, until they scattered as he recalled them, towards the obscure future. Where was Little Curren? he wondered, rehearsing diversions and obstacles his friend might have met; he had half-forgotten the curious, the youthful reason for his having in the first place suddenly departed, he had become merely a man waiting, without irritation, for a friend.

But Little Curren was coming back, his eyes glistening slightly as the street lamps caught his face. Impetuously leaving Sullivan he had walked eagerly into the crowd and swiftly come upon the little aged pair steadily progressing, two small birds with stiffly arranged bird steps —too swiftly for he jostled them a second in his youthful precipitation, and they stopped in surprise and looked round together indignantly, the lack of suppleness in their necks imposing the necessity to turn from the waist. Far from inscrutable yet endeavouring to convey he had no idea they would be there, to deny through his expression the implication he had set out all bent to summon, he hoped his careful, detached apology would not interest them particularly, that it would only placate them. Evidently he succeeded for, seeing no real danger, they hardly appeared to notice him, their having turned at all in the first place seeming for the most part a general response of instinct or ancient habit: they gazed woodenly past him for a moment and then, with a sound as of clearing the throat, rearranged their direction and continued along the pavement. Little Curren looked after them, the small, still quite erect figures in thin overcoats, one with a brown hat, the other wearing a dark-blue hat, in amazement. The sound of a voice from the withered, wizened throats had shocked him, he had not conceived they would be able to speak, they had appeared to move according to principles distant, distinct, other entirely from his own, his supple ability to walk or lope in a hurry, his rapid gestures—ages, epochs—why, they must have seen, Wellington back from Waterloo! He was stunned, and he breathed deeply to recover his lost imagination; his conception of things not swirling enough however to prevent him quickly resuming his step when he saw his astonishments and breathlessness had allowed the old couple, in their fixed way, to gain a lead in penetrating the nondescript identity of the crowd. Little Curren returning late down a darkened alley knew numbly that he could not have foreseen the quite unforseeable end to his tenacity, although he was not convinced by this reasonable expedient and less consoled. Nevertheless he strode into the press of people where, somewhere among the mercurial flashes of colour reflected from the late afternoon sun, the bobbing heads like innumerable swimmers, the random hustle, his two unwitting subjects were making their way, and half-completed questions came floating somewhere too in his apprehension as he glanced here and there,—why am I ferreting in this crowd after two such yellowed representatives of it; pity? affection! followed by other words until all ended in that one, for some as terrible as any, curiosity! something of a different nature from pity or affection or even the horror which in small degree was of those impulses stemming firmly into his curiosity, and angrily attempting to ignore the inadvertent conclusions, for his happening upon them shed the sense that they were not inclinations but dictates, searching for the couple nevertheless, he tossed his head so that his hair, bronzed by the evening sun, flicked quickly round his eyes, to rid himself of the word, curiosity, the minute, the inadequate explanation fumbling at his thoughts. There, there they were! Fantastic! And quite avidly he watched them, possibly held by a first sere foretaste of what he had yet to become, and found it curious to ponder that his own smooth skin was actually so unstable it could turn, would turn in a few decades as wrinkled and brittle, over the slow falling away; he placed his feet more firmly on the ground to counter rising images in his mind of disintegration beyond the vision, vast processes of decay! and his heels clicked vigorously as he followed the old couple to a corner round which they had turned out of sight. He wanted to see their faces, their rigid uncommunicative backs had only a limited ability to reveal that revelation he might, were they face to face, be able to grasp, a revelation he thought of to cause dread and yet exaltation, exaltation at unusual, at rare knowledge, Little Curren imagined eagerly, dread of its unusual secret. Though what it was he could not even dimly conceive —the secrets of age might be better guarded than there for the glancing of any idle eye—and yet if there was any communicable secret to be got from what was visible, who better than this ancient couple to betray to someone who, though young, was practised, was perceptive, at searching for the obscure in what he saw, their vital surprise? He hurried onwards down the side-street. Circumspectly drawing near, he crossed the road, a disadvantage in that it increased the distance between them but a tactful caution led him nevertheless while he looked his fill to keep the road's width at least away, strolling slowly a few yards in the rear with his head turned a shift aside. A bird twittered, screamed high and loud among the gloomy buildings. The old couple evidently noticed it for they bent their heads together and nodded; as the bird's shrill call ended the old man, walking near the kerb, lifted his stick upwards, perceptibly breaking the regular rhythm of their walk while they listened to the singing chirp that echoed clearly out of the clustered walls. They were so alert! Little Curren realised unexpectedly—would his concern in them change? And he determined to stay longer in their wake. Perhaps when he left them he would think differently, perhaps they were not as he thought, obviously they were not, nor could anyone be, it was improbable that any preliminary mass of speculation at first sight suggests has more than an accidental accuracy in common with the wide actuality of their hidden experience; how fruitful was this curious web he had woven, and walked into? Was it really anything more than a thing he had made for his amusement? And could it, did it stretch outside his own self, now walking along, entoiled in it? Across the road! What a ludicrous figure he cut, a deluded clown slinking stealthily against a grimy wall, surreptitiously staring at an aged couple whom he had begun by misunderstanding and still misunderstood. He began to feel humiliated, by his inability to understand them, by his presumption, by his having believed for the time his pretence of being able to understand them—or anything else! And, as well, by having found himself out. He had found himself out! Perhaps if he saw them truly face to face they would find him out too. Yet, perhaps! although hardly conceivable, if they did so he might, in such an instant of mutual understanding, however short, gain then in a different way a hint, a slender trace, of what it was, the hidden thing, that almost limitless experience which lay behind them and made it possible for them to bear the state beyond which he seemed so far from penetrating.

At that moment the narrow street ended and opened on to a wider city street flooded with traffic, to the right a pedestrian crossing marked on the surface, which the old couple made for and began to cross. He watched them and followed in agitation, confined and pressed upon by the circling of his imagination, labouring in confusion about his dismay. They reached the little concrete island in the middle of the road, and Little Curren close on their heels heard the old man say, "no, no, we won't be late at all," and again was astounded by the sound of the voice, but this time in a different way and again was aware of himself as unbearably, painfully ridiculous, too ridiculous for laughter, ridiculous into pity, and he stepped on to the island as they left it, each step after them augmenting this awareness as if he were a stupid mechanical dog unable to halt itself yet aware of how pathetic it was; a pathetic little attempt to... to what? There! he was incapable of thinking! a juvenile fumbling for, "knowledge about people!" And he became, then, not beyond laughter, but seized by it, and in loud paroxysms among his laughter he allowed relief to his sense of what was ridiculous, and because it was himself the laughter was louder still.

Halted in the middle of the road by loud bursts of laughter close behind them the old couple, ears involuntarily attracted by the jarring sound coming violently over the smooth hum of traffic, turned and saw Little Curren slightly bent at the stomach and head raised in his convulsive laughter, eyes for a moment on them. They appeared to recognise him for the old man's hand started to move, perhaps in the direction of Little Curren, perhaps only to guide the figure of his partner back to their passage across the road. But simultaneously there was the overwhelming blare of the horns of an omnibus and the slow wailing screech of brakes as the long, heavy vehicle slewed to a halt perhaps two or three inches away from the old couple. The old couple, already disturbed, tottered gently past the high radiator of the omnibus to the side of the road, where they seemed to sink slowly down to a sitting position. Little Curren bent half-double on the island, struck still, forgot to look for his all-revealing secret in their eyes. The driver of the bus peered out of his window and, seeing that he had not touched them, blared again on the horn and, engaging his gears, gradually drew away. By the time Little Curren was able to see round the bus a crowd had collected at the roadside. A whistle blew. He groped at the edge of the crowd, trying to question someone. "Ssh," several people said, "Be quiet." He could not see them. Soon an ambulance arrived and when the old couple, covered carefully and put on a stretcher, had been lifted in, the crowd began sadly to disperse. Little Curren went too, without purpose, meandering aimlessly near the river, sitting down from time to time and gazing at the water which, as the evening lamps went on, began to sparkle and gleam, then in deep lethargy rose to continue his walk in the dark. When it grew late he thought of Sullivan, and steeled himself to return and meet him ; if he were still there. Leaving the river he went heavily in the direction of the street he had earlier left and, as he went on, his desire to see Sullivan increased, it became a necessity to see him, to talk himself back from such a dangerous route to the usual, the undistinguished, the understandable. He plunged rapidly, anxiously, down the final oppressive alley leading to the street where Sullivan might be, turned out of it at the other end and, walking hurriedly and trembling, he saw Sullivan—sunk in his seat—who had been sitting long in the dim evening hours, a heavy tranquil figure, and as he approached his heart beat more painfully than ever.

He walked on to the nearly unoccupied terrace into Sullivan's delicate aura of fantasy and contemplation, distraught and confused.

"Sullivan," he said, still standing, and Sullivan shook his head imperceptibly as his eyes blinked open.

"That old couple."

"What about them?" Sullivan's voice expressed a kindly surprise, he having missed through his drifting meditation the agitated tone.

"They're dead."

Sullivan, after the first indrawn breath, which sounded from the shadows like a short sigh, the first small jerk of the head, Sullivan the tactful, the gentle man of personal resource, was without resources, and did not know what to say. After a further second's consideration it occurred to him that it might not be necessary to say anything, and he did not, and made only a gesture with one hand, which expressed what he would have said and was as effective. Then he sat quietly, his head bent and shoulders hunched in his chair, while Little Curren's voice went miserably on.

— P. W. Bowles

[Part Two of a long poem by Christopher Logue, the first part of which appeared in Merlin Number One.]

'to see Tiresias,
Eyeless that was, a shade, that is in hell'

II

Old man, prepare thy sides for death rattle, doom of Atreus.

Through the watchful day, May June, kingfisher speeds
between the light and dusk. The tide snores at my hearth,
weeds clutter my veins, and from my chart four naked blowers
dizzy the spirecock till he knows no point, year after year...

The wind is low, hugged into troughs of water, whales-mere,
kindless, to polish ship's-beak or to rot their clinkers;
furrowed for centuries and never harvest, except for jewelled
deadman and his anthem, harsh in the storm throat.

Resentment of the sea, moon's eunuch at his revolution, the
hulks like skull, cordage for hair, tide-filth as blood,
and for a crown, mast stumps and battered lanthorns.
Somewhere there is a kingdom drowned for sake of wind.

Day's end, and in the drifting night, the wind brings metal
and wood noises through the reeds, their soft clubs beating
out the time. I hear across the sand, whiplength and rowlock,
backs bracketed by the agony of lash, dead messages;

Among the noise one voice, daft, daft, for a season,
like the bent wing'd gull, repetitive, man, mad at compass,
amazed to see his needle bludgeoned North, took by magnetism
though quinquereme strike South, and dead-eye strut the
topmast through the moon.

Ship drawn beyond the chariot of neptune and his girls
all dolphin mounted to conch music. If it is water that
we sail, the fish have voices, and the wind is like guitar
through halyards: figurehead blinks with salt, and counts
the waves, one, two...

At quarterdeck, almost at ocean's end, wind wiped his lips
and brought the curses of the rowingbench, knot after knot,
through freight of surf, to sea's maw, and the miles of cliff
that hang from where I sit, curtains of winterlight, ruffled
and sown with gannets.

In gust the cock staggers by blow struck by the drawn men,
spins while the gannets fly it down, and splits the wind
by creaking pivot, into a voice, and noise...

That Ptolemy was wrong, is wrong.
Sea camber has an edge, and falls
In cataracts of Styx, till
Pleiades wash with salt, and burn
Seven and always at the ocean base.

When we had time to pick the flowers
Of a calanture, nothing was done.
Now that we feast on blood
The gimbles of our world, moon, sun,
Earth, sea, are like four elements in
Alchemist's retort, chastised into
A gold-drop or an ash.

Date stone and orange pip are
Meaningless. We speak of past,
Of future, equally; what happens
In a star we know today, later,
If lie, we, wrong, rub our
Integrity with ductile promises.

These ledges where the land runs out
Are ours forever. Split keel, yoke
Of a mile high water, and the troughs
Of blood gone white, to learn the
Fresh dead of their company.

Let Palinurus squeak, the feast is set.

Long benches, wooden, upon them cups of iron split with gold;
long clouds over the hills, the land slung low in water:
no landfall here; only the wreck, waste cinnamon, bones and cloth,
flotsam to spice and fill, and hollow chine to mallet on the
tabletop, white hands to maul in a lagoon of madness, girls
without flesh...

And under the benches, men, sodden, asleep, or dead like
shadows edge, the oaths enough to pass Castor to Pollux
and the two to dust. Dead in stone jars the wine, the
stopped up sun, tree grit and grape pulp trod by feet
that ended at the knee.

To dream and sob where night replenishes its dark, and comes
again, muddled with sound, tide sorted; a Caliban to guy at
cliff birds, a dimpled Ariel to freeze the leaves in turn, and
make them halt, fall green, and bud four colours on one stalk.

In the wind tonight iron and oak, their muffled echoes, and
ghosts beneath the summer tide, two voices mixed with weed
and razorshells, graveyard to limbs and soundboard to the
ever rustling dead...

I hear and note, and know no possibility of reply, my guest
each season, sun's arc to cut my brow, and the visiting albatross
comes and is gone.

Dawn, the Ram is set, the hind light of the Plough is down.

Elpenor, oarsman, deadman, do you move upright in the scarves of sea,
trudging a nopath with sky's rim as transom? and also dead
Odysseus. How do I speak now death has come between and Charon
smuggles you across the wash into the hot duct of infinity?

I mould a word, it breaks my lip and is wind broken, accidentally
blur, blur, such crazy pollen lights the now already dead.
Maybe a dragon, maybe thunder, bellows in the hills;
and the rain, slow, grey, folds down the moon continuously.

I prod the chart, consult the bird, and look for fire talons
in the leavings of my grate. Nothing is heard of sphinx or
pheonix; the cot of flame is grey, my candle wick is stiff
like coffin nail, rigid in breeze.

I sort the wind: voice out of voice: tell Caliban by North

and Ariel because the agile buffeting, cowers the copper bird
and makes him still...

They say these two walk fist by fist along the reef of Avalon;
one with his master's voice, one with his skin. Both slam
three dice cut out of Elpenor's bone, and score by tatoos on
the back of Ithica,

Play evening for the dark, dark for high noon, and dark again
until the bones are smooth, four royal families awash in grit
and spindrift...

I have an ear for the immaculate pebbles,

The waves at their obsession,

The waves...

Ariel. Now we are alone.

Caliban. We are two; and the ships pass; and you read their flags.

Ariel. The moving fathoms of the air delight me not. I am
so tanned my wings are like old leaves, that lift,
and do not fall. As for the ships; they pass, and pass;
the language of their bunting fits not my word hoard
and I am shuddered into cloud by god's-eye at the keelhead,
getting no message but, beware, the old magician with
the coloured hat, not of this crew. We sail for oranges and
bread, uncaptained, as his glass ship was melted at the
equinox. Doom our anchor, and the sails, tacked bladders
of the cherubin, stained with cross. No wind but oars' force
out of all charts—

Caliban. Four Kings.

Ariel. Hengist and Richard, Herod and Pisistratus.

Caliban. You mention them like beads. Have you a crucifix of
driftwood to tip your rosary? This is a magic island,
trees without shade and apples without core, impossible
for landfall, King or lout. And yet you gaze, and
mutter in your beard, 'pinnace' or 'flag', if gnat or
albatross break in horizon. And when some land, and if,
do you expect high hats and banished swords, leader with
zodiac about his waist and wand to change the reef to
turf, spindrift to leaves, you to a phoenix without
the scarring flame, and I to thinking stone—

Ariel. Four Queens.

Caliban. Where are the pirate captains of their loins?

Ariel. Cheops and Frederick—

Caliban. Is the moon out?

Ariel. No. Only the owl.

Caliban. He comes through forest and orchard, diving by starlight, but not brought by star. No spats upon his legs to prove against collision in the dark.

Ariel. Hornèd one. No place upon his wings for sunshaft. No augury for he flies single.

Caliban. And if you bare his guts they're full of mice bones, that fall in palm like cats' claw, and predict, nothing but fear.

Ariel. Four Knaves.

Caliban. And who?

Ariel. No names. The echo of their bastard angelus stumbles and quickly chokes in foam, brought miles by wave to glitter in the scissors of this reef.

Caliban. Always the sea has Tristram in its breath.

Ariel. Gave, and gives Tristram back in bubble weed.

Caliban. Four Kings.

Ariel. Ceasar and—something is turning the water.

Caliban. The moon.

Ariel. No.

Caliban. A log.

Ariel. Blind you. A man.

Caliban. Why not a log?

Ariel. Look in its eyes and see a double Caliban.

Caliban. Arms too: and moving: its flesh blown yellow,
where it knocks it gashes red and stains.

Ariel. Dragging its drownedness onto coral.

Caliban. Let us bind weeds about its wounds.

Ariel. A King?

Caliban. Its cloth of blood.

Ariel. How small we are beside it.

Caliban. And now it sleeps.

I sleep not. Creature come near. Floated and filled with salt,
and dead except for burial. Bury me and I will make you both possible
visitors—

Ariel. To where. And—
Caliban. When. We have heard sea promises, tide after tide,
imagining in storm the reef as galleon; apple tubbed,
each other's hand as sextant, horizon landfall,
and the night, seneschal of shoreline, a step to cities.
. **Ariel.** How to visit?

My grave must be upright, for I must stand in death as if in chains.

Caliban. I know a pit sucked out by undertow,
deep as a man.

Bury me.

Ariel. The rock is woven thick, and if not dead on
entry, you will drown in your own blood.

Bury me.

Caliban. The tide is changing. Soon the owl will cross.
Ariel, say he is Arthur?
Ariel. Quick, and be covered with his face.
Caliban. If dead and we the same, what profit we, Caliban
thinks of Caliban.
Ariel. His blood runs on your foot.
Caliban. Yours the same. It changes to a talon...
Ariel. Webbed your own... skin into feathers... lift your arms...
Caliban. Wings Ariel, wings,

The light, Caliban, takes your eye, you fly black headed, where it chases
[night,
blundering, mist rolled, you are gone with it blundering all but air...
Ariel, by your wings out of my blood, bury me!

Ariel, soar,
roar water away from my
wing tip, Caliban,
gulls blight, fly
roc and night visitor
Avalon folds,
holds, Caliban

only thy voice in
its crevices,
gone for us are its
appleless terraces
      Gone like
our voices, changed
by the bloodless hand
of drownèd man,
voices for wings
to mount the trellises
of wind, of wet, of wing...

They fly a gull, a roc, wings splayed in the wind of my drowning. Without burial I hear the stammer of my tongue, my flesh drags from the fabric of my bone.

Thus to have come,
Out of argosy
To Avalon
Missing Hesperides.
In apple trees
To find the creatures
Of a master fiction
Wing ready
To desert Odysseus
Or Elpenor, hurt
To death by water.

Burn bright sun
Incarnadine the skin
Of island flesh.
It gibbet swung
From apple tree
Of Avalon, clubs
The prevailing wind.

Wrong, Ptolemy,
The Ram, stands
At year's end
And has no cause
Other than shining.

Hear, and in my ears, the tide's lip
Takes gravel in perpetual applause.

It is the covenant of birds that they fly south, Summertime, and Avalon they pass, a scrag of waste, to thrust fictitious waves, back on the shores they touch in passing, and man watching, the birds flying, as an oracle, of their passing. While the apostles of the night, blind out the dark, poise, and ignore blood oracles and murmur nothing, constantly among themselves.

— Christopher Logue

Samuel Beckett : AN INTRODUCTION

Samuel Beckett, an Irish writer long established in France, has recently published two novels which, although they defy all commentary, merit the attention of anyone interested in this century's literature.

The position of Mr. Beckett is quite unique. He has, since his association with James Joyce in the late twenties and early thirties been recognized as an astute critic. In 1929 he contributed an excellent critical article to Shakespeare and Co.'s collective commentary on Joyce, *Our Exagmination Round His Factification for Incamination of Work in Progress.* It was he who in 1930 undertook the first trial translation of "Anna Livia Plurabelle" into French. That translation presaged one of the directions Mr. Beckett's work was later to take. For it is a noteworthy fact that he undertook the translation from English, his first language, into French, his second. Some twenty years later, Mr. Beckett was to publish a startling novel, written not in English, but directly in his adapted language.

The example of a language-switch leads one inevitably to think of Joseph Conrad. Both writers chose finally to write in tongues not theirs by birth. But there the similarity ends, for, whereas Conrad ultimately gained, in the sense that he forsook a minor for what is generally considered a major language, Mr. Beckett has, in a numerical sense at least, lost in choosing to write in French.

No one is questioning the unquestionable merits of French as a language, nor trying to hold a brief for English as in any way the superior of the two languages. It is nevertheless a *fait accompli* that Mr. Beckett has become a French writer, as much as Conrad or Henry James or Mr. T. S. Eliot have become English writers, and his work will ultimately be judged as a part of twentieth century French literature.

One could speculate further on the reasons for Mr. Beckett's decision to write in French, but it would be pointless to do so. It is sufficient to notice that he is undoubtedly a more adaptable, and perhaps a more honest person than most of his colleagues-in-exile; he is a prime example of that literary phenomenon which began some time during the last century and continues today, the writer in exile.

A writer divorced from his society places himself in a precarious position. An artist, a musician, can work under whatever sky, but a novelist, one of whose sources of material is the society into which he was born, risks, in turning his back on that society, cutting himself off both from that source of material and from his rightful literary heritage. Moreover, by prolonged contact with a foreign environment, he risks losing his mastery of idiom, unless, as is the instance of James Joyce, he is strong enough to take his country with him, or, as in the instance of Beckett, he is adaptable enough to assume the *obligations* of his new environment.

Whether Mr. Beckett consciously felt all this is a moot point. As late as 1938 he was still an Irish writer working in English. *Murphy*, his second novel, was published in that year. With *More Pricks Than Kicks*, his first novel, published four years earlier, it will doubtless remain his sole contribution to English literature.

It is unfortunate that no English edition of either *More Pricks Than Kicks* or *Murphy* is available, and we can judge the latter work only from the French translation which was published in 1947. Both books passed almost without notice. The only commentary I have ever found which makes mention of them is Mr. W. Y. Tindall's remark, in *Forces in Modern British Literature*, "*More Pricks Than Kicks* and *Murphy*, by Samuel Beckett, the best of Joyce's followers, are precious, elegant and absurd."

Murphy is at times precious, for it is not a fully mature work. Mr. Beckett's erudition sometimes clutters the novel like unnecessary though colorful and often humorous bric-a-brac. It is "absurd" only in the sense that M. Albert Camus' *l'Étranger* or *Le Malentendu* are absurd, that is, to use the Sartrean term, "nothing less than the relationship of man to the world."

Already in *Murphy* there are clear indications of Beckett's future development. The novel is set in the everyday surroundings of London and Dublin, with only minor deformations. Murphy is a comparatively young man—as in all Mr. Beckett's novels, the protagonist's age is not specified—whose desire for "repose" places him *a priori* at odds with the human condition. The symbol of that repose is his *berceuse*, his rocking chair, to which he attaches himself "by seven scarfs." He is seated, nude, because "c'était seulement le corps apaisé qu'il pouvait commencer à vivre dans son esprit... Et le genre de vie qu'il menait dans son esprit lui faisait plaisir, un tel plaisir que c'était presque une absence de douleur[1]."

Murphy has lived in this manner "for months, perhaps for years," but even relative repose is difficult to attain, and once arrived at, almost impossible to hold on to: the building in which Murphy lives has been condemned by the authorities and he must find new lodgings; the girl he loves, the ex-prostitute Celia, threatens to leave him unless he hunts for work, and so the precarious tranquillity is upset.

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[1] "only when his body was pacified could he begin to live in his mind... And the kind of life he led in his mind gave him pleasure, such a pleasure that it was almost an absence of pain."

Murphy, who lives by an astrological system in which he has complete faith, realizes that "en gagnant sa vie il perdrait ce qui la constituait[1]." Nevertheless, spurred on by Celia, he relinquishes his rocker, and after a series of perfunctory attempts, at last secures work as a male nurse in an insane asylum. In finding work he has earned the right to Celia's love, but he has also lost his repose. Influenced by the environment of the asylum, he commits suicide. Those of his acquaintances who throughout the book have been hunting for him—Miss Counihan, who thinks she loves Murphy, Neary, who thinks he loves Miss Counihan, etc.—arrive only in time to discover Murphy's at last "peaceful body."

A long short-story, *L'Expulsé*, published before but obviously written after the French translation of *Murphy*, links *Murphy* to his third novel *Molloy*. *L'Expulsé* tells of a man, more world-weary than Murphy, who is ejected from his lodgings for an unexplained and no doubt unexplainable reason. It is obvious that he must find another room. He rents a horse-drawn cab, whose obliging chauffeur, after fruitless efforts to find his homeless client a room, offers him the hospitality of his own apartment. *L'Expulsé* accepts, but prefers to sleep in the stable where the cabman keeps his horse. At dawn he abandons the stable for the street. And the story ends: "Je ne sais pas pourquoi j'ai raconté cette histoire. J'aurais pu tout aussi bien en raconter une autre. Peut-être qu'une autre fois je pourrais en raconter une autre. Ames vives, vous verrez que cela se ressemble[2]."

Mr. Beckett's next novel is one of those "other stories" he might just as well have told. Molloy, an old man with one stiff leg and the other stiffening, sets out to find his dying mother, who lives somewhere in a city called X. From as far back as he can remember—Mulloy's memory is as imprecise as the city he is searching for is vague—he has been going towards his mother in order to establish their relationship on a less unsettled basis. "Et quand j'étais chez elle, et j'y suis souvent arrivé, je la quittais sans avoir rien fait. Et quand je n'y étais plus, j'étais à nouveau en route vers elle, espérant faire mieux la prochaine fois. Et quand j'avais l'air d'y renoncer et de m'occuper d'autre chose ou de ne plus m'occuper de rien, en réalité je ne faisais que fourbir mes plans et chercher le chemin de la maison[3]."

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[1] "that in earning his living he would lose that which constitutes his life."

[2] "I don't know why I told that story. I could just as well have told another. Perhaps another time I shall tell another. Lively souls, you will see how much they resemble one another."

[3] "And when I was with her, and I often arrived there, I left her without having done anything. And when I was no longer there, I was again on my way towards her, hoping to do better the next time. And when I appeared to give up the project, and to busy myself with something else or no longer to busy myself with anything, I was, in reality, polishing my plans and hunting for the road to her house".

Molloy's wanderings take him first to a city, which may or may not be the city X, then to the country, then into a forest. There, no longer able to walk, even with the aid of his crutches, he lies down and begins to crawl, serpent-like, progressing "fifteen paces a day without exerting (himself) to the limit." Finally, completely exhausted, he falls into a ditch at the edge of the forest.

The second half of the book is a story parallel to Molloy's, which begins at the end and ends at the beginning. Jacques Moran, who leads a tidy life tending his bees and his chickens, receives an order from the messenger Gaber, sent by the invisible Youdi, to go to find Molloy. In company with his son, Moran sets out, knowing that the mission is futile, and that it will lead to the ruin of both himself and his son. Later, having failed to find Molloy, having lost his son somewhere along the way, Moran receives the order from Youdi to return home. He obeys and arrives to find his hives dry, his chickens dead, his house abandoned.

This second part of *Molloy*, which begins: "Il est minuit. La pluie fouette les vitres. Je suis calme. Tout dort... Mon rapport sera long. Je ne l'achèverai peut-pas", concludes: "Alors je rentrai dans la maison et j'écrivis. Il est minuit. La pluie fouette les vitres. Il n'était pas minuit. Il ne pleuvait pas[1]."

Already, in *Molloy*, the "story" has been relegated to a place of secondary importance. It has become almost gratuitious. In *Malone*, whose very name implies solitude, the telling of stories is avowedly a way of killing time, of filling the silence with something less monotonous than silence. "Je serai quand même bientôt tout à fait mort enfin," are Malone's first words. "Peut-être le mois prochain. Ce serait alors le mois d'avril ou de mai... Je mourrais aujourd'hui même, si je voulais, rien qu'en poussant un peu, si je pouvais vouloir, si je pouvais pousser[2]."

Beyond desire, beyond hope, beyond illusion, pretension, hypocrisy, suspended in the vacuum between the end of life and the beginning of death, the only real repose possible, Malone is left with the absorbing problem of how to spend his remaining time. "Je crois", he says, "que je pourrai me raconter quatre histoires, chacune sur un thème différent. Une sur un homme, une autre sur une femme, une troisième sur une chose quelconque et une enfin sur un animal, un oiseau peut-être... Peut-être que je mettrai l'homme et la femme dans la même, il y a si peu de différence entre un homme et la la femme, je veux dire entre les miens[3]."

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[1] "It is midnight. Rain lashes the windows. I am calm. Everything is asleep... My report will be long. Perhaps I shall never finish it."...

"Then I came back into the house and wrote. It is midnight. Rain lashes the windows. It was not midnight. It was not raining."

[2] "All the same I shall soon be completely dead at last. Perhaps next month. That would make it the month of April or May... I could die today this very day, if I wished, merely by pushing a little, if I could wish, if I could push."

[3] "I think that I'll be able to tell myself four stories, each on a different theme. One about a man, one about a woman, one about any old thing, and one about an animal, perhaps a bird. Maybe I'll put the man and the woman together, there is so little difference between a man and a woman, I mean between mine."

If by chance he should finish "too soon", then he'll talk about his possessions. "It will be a sort of inventory." The possessions include the stub of a pencil, an almost filled notebook, one yellow shoe, a long stick that he uses to push his chamber pot to the door and to draw his food, left from time to time by an anonymous hand, from the door to the bed.

Malone's stories, which are abandoned, resumed, and abandoned again, become more and more disjointed as they progress. Sapo, the sixteen year old boy, is subsequently transformed into MacMann, who crosses endless plains, beneath a driving rain, and finally lies down, Molloy-like, until he almost dissolves into the mud itself. He finishes in an insane asylum, grows older, weaker, until his condition approaches that of Malone, his creator.

Mr. Beckett's first play, *En attendant Godot*, is as yet unpublished, but extracts from it recently transcribed for the French Radio reveal that same illogical profundity, that same dark, terrible humor which characterize *Molloy* and *Malone*.

Two *clochards*, who have long tramped the world together, meet in front of a tree set in an uncertain countryside. While waiting for their friend, Godot, whom they only vaguely remember, they pass the time conversing endlessly and pointlessly. They are interrupted by the nobleman of the neighborhood, in front of whose tree they have chanced to wander. The nobleman is leading a man, Lucky, on a leash. It is Lucky's duty to "perform" whenever his master so indicates by cracking his whip. To perform, Lucky stands upright, doffs his hat and recites, at an incredible pace, a tirade in which the worst blasphemies and the purest poetry intermingle at random. Lucky continues until his master, at first distracted but then bored, cracks his whip a second time, the signal for Lucky to don his hat again and stem the flow. "It helps kill time," Lucky's master says resignedly.

In the end, a little boy arrives to announce that M. Godot will not come tonight, but that he will in all probability come tomorrow. The two tramps decide that, since the reason for their vigil no longer exists, or is at least postponed, they may as well lie down and go to sleep.

II

The progression from *Murphy* through *Molloy* to *Malone* is evident. The movement is away from the world of the body towards the world of the mind. Murphy moves past the still recognizable landmarks of Hyde Park, Marble Arch, and West Brompton. Molloy's city has become anonymous; Malone's is no more than a cry beyond his window, a light in the window across the street.

Murphy's external universe still has substance, his friends, names. Molloy's contact with the world of blood and flesh and identity cards still exists. He is aware of his own body, if only of its infirmities. He, like *L'Expulsé*, is still plagued by the police. Malone's external universe is reduced to his four walls and to that hand which reaches through the door to draw forth the filled chamber pot.

As space has dissolved, so has time. Murphy, despite lapses, lends an ear to the tower chimes in order to reach Celia and home in time for supper. Molloy, if beyond hours, still moves through sunlight into shadow and back to sunlight again. In Malone's room, day and night have withered to a constant, though slightly changing tone of gray.

The movement, then, is away from external precision towards the increasing autonomy of consciousness. And within the borders of that pure consciousness there are three divisions, as Murphy gives them, "clarté, pénombre et noir," (brightness, semidarkness and darkness). Beckett's characters move progressively away from *clarté* towards the *noir*, which is made up of "neither elements nor states, but only of forms which come into being and slide away into the dust of a new becoming, without love or hate or any principle of conceivable change."

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III

It is unfortunate for Mr. Beckett's literary reputation that his name is invariably linked with that of James Joyce, and that very often he is dismissed as merely another of the master's too numerous disciples. Joyce undoubtedly had a profound influence on his younger compatriot, but Mr. Beckett's work is completely personal, in line with certain tendencies of contemporary literature and yet very new and different. *Murphy* and *Molloy* inevitably recall Kafka, but neither is imitation Kafka. They likewise have an affinity with M. Camus's *l'Etranger* and with M. Henri Michaux's *Plume*. But if one desired to delve deeper, it would be possible to return to Xavier de Maistre's *Voyage autour de ma Chambre*—compare, for example, Mr. Beckett's theory of the division of mind and body, in *Murphy*, with de Maistre's theory of "l'âme et la bête"—or even further to Laurence Sterne's *Tristam Shandy*.

Whether Mr. Beckett was influenced by any or all of these writers, whether he borrowed from them, seems quite secondary. For as Mr. Eliot once remarked, the mature artist steals, the immature artist immitates. And Mr. Beckett's work is not imitation.

The inevitable question remains to be asked, What does Mr. Beckett's work mean? The meaning, if there must be one, is perhaps latent in the lack of meaning. "Nothing is more real than nothing," says Malone. What is significant is insignificant; what is insignificant, significant, and therefore insignificant, and so on around the circle. Murphy's arrangement for eating his assorted crackers, Molloy's sucking stones, Malone's pencil stub are as important as another man's car or twenty room mansion; no more so perhaps, but certainly no less.

Mr. Beckett builds, because building is a part of living, as destruction is a part of living. Building or destroying, "cela n'a pas d'importance." "I am what I do," says Celia. "No," says Murphy, "you do what you are. You do a fraction of what you are... 'Can't go, Mama.' That kind of doing. Inevitable and stinking."

And as he builds, so Mr. Beckett destroys. His characters are never certain of their facts. The city across the plain from Molloy's ditch might be *his* city, "although nothing let (him) suppose it was his." "It is raining," says Jacques Moran. "It is not raining." The paralyzed, bed-ridden Malone is almost certain that it is the month of April or May, "a thousand little symptoms tell him so." But it is possible that he is mistaken, and that the Feast Day of Saint John or even the 14th of July, "anniversary of liberty", are already past. At the end of *Malone*, Lemuel, the guardian of the asylum, takes a group of inmates on a picnic, and proceeds to murder them by splitting their skulls with an axe. So Mr. Beckett (Samuel-Lemuel?) destroys his characters, his created world, bringing again to nothing what was nothing.

Is it possible for Mr. Beckett to progress further without succumbing to the complete incoherence of inarticulate sound, to the silence of nothingness where mud and Mulloy, where object and being are not only contiguous, but one? Mr. Beckett's next book, announced for publication early this winter, will have to reply. Perhaps the name is significant. It is called *L'Innommable.*

—Richard Seaver

(This is No. 1 of a series of Elegies. No. 4, entitled Quintus Mucius Scaevola, *was published in MERLIN Number One.)*

ELEGY I : *The Garlic Flower.*

Sapor of / augury
Stood generate;
And the eaves of thine augury
Pediment over mine algum,

And the wit of thy burin
Confident over my blazon,

And the flotes of thy commerce
Graving the waters,

And my carack is ceiléd
                    and under,
Stands the whip-master,

We have had shewbread,
    is this sustenance for thine oars?

⁂

That frail craft
    minus its bronze and accoutrements,
    left to the ocean and combers
And witless / blind-oxidation,

Stripped of its life
On the rib-reef of Scylla
With fruit and corn in its caverns,

Sapor / of lachrimae
Stood generate;
And the songs of thine alchemy
Insistent to mine ear,

And the breath of thy choros
Cozens me into damnation,
And the breath of thy lyms
Pinking my heels,

And my dromond in haven
and over,
Stands the whip-master,

We have had shewbread / this
is sustenance for thine oars.

Meagre of planking and limber
Stretched to the lintel of rivet and peak
(I have heard death in the breakers)

I have heard
The waters of death on her back
And the creak of the oak in the teak
of her cabins / ceiléd with cablet,
though I have led rivers into this earth
with the corn greening up
I have made no revolutions
nor sponsoréd any jihad in this East
nor trouble in the sand/ed-places:

His seed falling down into fertile loam
with the forests darkening up
into the focus of fruitation;
Yet I too have seen of my nakedness
and have not eaten,

— Henry Charles Hatcher

LES SOURCES

As the roots of this lilac tree reach out
under the soil
As its roots suck in the treasures that
are made into lillac
I lie here with my soil.
Whether it is a book, a woman or wine,
matters little,
But as the lilac is made by the lilac
In strict proportion of earth, sun and
water,
So I read ten books to each woman
And take one bottle with each book.
Thus in strict proportion of earth, sun
and water,
This poet makes poetry.

LA PRIMEUR

So you think these are apples that she holds.
I tell you they are moons, but you do not believe me.
Yet if you drop one it will break
Into thousands of stars.

She knows these are not apples,
But don't tell her, unless you want her to cry
And drop them all and run home.
It is one way to make a universe,
But the stars are so far and so small,
And the moon is so cold. Be patient
And presently she will bring apples that may be tasted,
And dropped without such afterthoughts.

— Patrick Brangwyn

DIRGES FOR THE WORLD'S END

1

Knicknacks on trivial shelves will melt,
the dripping dresden shepherdess mar
an immaculate floorlessness
(we'll have no feet
when our bones drift and meteor dust
down voids with porcelain swans).

Sleepers in separate beds will meet
at that sweet aspirin time,
clockless and unclothed to keep
tryst in the atom deep
where lovers and enemies are locked
by an abstract embrace.

2

Nerve ends won't hear
the screaming stimuli
or eye drink at refreshing
fountains of light.

The source in the stone mountain
stops, springs snap like clocks.

We wonder briefly
was there choice? remembering
a sun like some aunt's silk cushion
now seen abruptly to erupt—

Murderous as bombs
were innocent objects—
the sweet soap slipped on
or homicidal linoleum;

A picked pimple spreading
ominous venom
was deadly as politics.

3

When clouds unclose like curtains
and epilogue begins, actorless
except for one
ironic dove down the broken winds

narrow trees may blossom like mosaic,
tile and bits of bottle shine among
parthenonic ruins strewn
with stony fingers in the radio dung.

Old Noah need not exit
from his ark to populate.
His squirming sperm was twisted
eras before Ararat.

The long oppressive acts are etched
on earth by clues of claw.
Sabre teeth attest
the amoeba's tragic flaw.

— Harold Witt

RAZOR

Metaphysics is a quiver of thighs
Intellectualized
A structure projected on the universe
In perverse
Ways, unempirical
A laundry list
Of delusive categories
Spawned by the fervour of an evangelist
Or priest....

— Occam

COUNTER-LOVE*

> "It was for the instant confounding and bottomless, for if he *were* innocent what then on earth was *I?*"
>
> HENRY JAMES : "The Turn of The Screw."

I could not say any longer how I had met her, I could specify even to the yellow and red reflection, the reflection of cherries, the garden candelabras, but I was incapable of reliving this encounter as I had relived all those that preceded it. Doubtless it was too living to be probed, and all that skin already touched, to be touched again, froze my heart.

He holds to me neither for money nor for love, for pride nor for pity.

To wonder why we are there this evening?

You will know, Daniele, when I know why I met you. When I know why I sat, that first evening, on the bench. Sonorous depth of cars splashing the pavement, humid depth of rain, of prostitutes to the left, to the right, before, behind—That evening, Paris was entirely peopled with prostitutes, and I felt calm, for I had mummified the city with a poem on the prostitutes.

He sat down near me and waited five minutes. "Have you a match, please?" His fingers trembled. His eyes grey-green, mauve-ringed, and his pale curving lips gave the lie to the attraction of his youth and of his smooth skin. Of a detached elegance, one could discern in him a combination of uncertainty and charm, of the timid child and the intellectual "fin de race". He was still silent. "What a beautiful night; isn't it?" His eye-lids opened: "Yes, a beautiful night..." It was on a similar night that I had discovered François. On a similar night that he had left me to be married. I shall never marry! The priest heard me, in the confessional, with great indulgence. I told him my story in the sacristy, with all the details, and I noticed that he was crying. I told him how I had sinned,

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*Extract from « Contre-Amour », Edition de Minuit, 1952.

and he cried! He wished me good luck, also... Good luck! It is not enough to be pretty and to have money to keep a man...! I was anxious about the time because I didn't have my watch.

"This district is terribly deserted..."

"Oh... (He made a vague gesture) you come here often?"

"Hardly ever... and you? You're a student?"

I had pretended that I was a medical student. A student, to be serious, in medicine to show how smart I was. He appeared not to be impressed. We had moved abruptly to the Champs-Élysées, talking of love—not love, but of love in general. I had hindered him from going to the cinema, and he was glancing obviously at the hoardings. "I hope I haven't ruined your programme for you?" "No... No... I will go tomorrow!" Of love in general. I approved: it's only pleasure that counts. To hell with prejudices! One o'clock in the morning. I will go back to Montreuil in a taxi: they would be standing in their room, and would repeat to me that I dishonour the family "You dishonour the family!" howled my father. "She dishonours the family!" sobbed my mother. They had, however, discovered the letter from François, addressed to me; to me... It is getting bitterly cold. Still, if I catch a chill, that will settle everything and they will give me my "week" without flinching...! The lights from above plunge swords into the Seine; they are the colour of blood. They have the heat of blood! No, not that! Not already! Our lips join as in a prayer... His tongue tastes of fresh lettuce... His teeth are fresh and gentle against mine... But his hand burns my breasts, my thighs... I will visit him tomorrow; I will put on high heels and my Russian-Leather. We will go to see "Tovaritch" after dinner... oh! no, not that! Not already...

⁂

I had only spoken Simone's name. "We will find each other at the exit..." And, at the exit, Henry would pick up Simone... So what did this abandon mean, this irony? Jacques knew perfectly well that it meant nothing—or, rather, that Henry had gone to buy some cigarettes at the corner-café. The film was poor. Having arrived in the middle, they'd stayed for the first half which they hadn't seen, and reckoned a few minutes more for Henry. It was raining. The cinema had several exits. Simone and Jacques had posted themselves under a canopy to watch for them. Periodically, Jacques worried, "We can't wait like this! You're right. Let's go into this café, Henry will surely think to look for us there. It's the only one in the neighbourhood..." Henry didn't think. Simone wasn't nearly so bothered: "We'll find them at the restaurant—wasn't he going to end the day with a party? In that case, it's unlikely he will come to the restaurant...—You think so, Jacques?—As for me, I don't mind changing pubs; what do you think? We could telephone and if he's not there we can eat at the Chinese restaurant. Do you like Chinese cooking?" She didn't know it. Excellent opportunity. Jacques was stupified at his own audacity. There was no reply from the restaurant. "Shall we go and see?—Oh, no, too bad for him! Besides, it's too late." They had gone through a marvellous meal. Jacques had slily incited her to drink, stiffening with pepper the already strongly-spiced sauces. Then they went to Dupont's for coffee. Jacques had drawn off his dead-pan mask, and relaxed into confidences: a careful panorama which he had operated methodically, measuring his effects, to his own advantage... There was no time to lose! His landlady was vigilant. Jacques had escorted her: "To a near-by stop!" Actually there were two; he might have said anything! On the door-step, he had hesitated. A rough gesture could spoil everything, and he dreaded a too keen retort, a too definitive retort. Henry had supported the alibi:

"I'm tired, old man; and I'm going on vacation... If it amuses you!"

I wavered three months and Henry had her back. I had got used to loving her as if she were dead. To love her in myself for the sake of loving—I mean through necessity to confirm love. All that I had written in my adolescence turned about my inability to love; I reversed the order of it and persecuted myself to make this love impossible. Presuming it existed in the measure that I opposed it.

Another thing was the obsession with my intelligence, based on fear and pride. Is there any more despairing thing than some one too intelligent? Intelligence doesn't lead to madness, but to death; it gnaws your guts, your heart, life; it sits at the wheel and forbids you to drive: "Area for people and such-like-things—Streng verboten! Forbidden to see and to touch without understanding! Penalty of death for adultery with life!" It puts itself in the place of life, accelerates on the "good for...", brakes on the "what good is it!", and ends by drawing wisely up to the cemetery where you assist at your own burial. What good is it to feed such an intelligence for the admiration of imbeciles? I was sick of aping my intelligence in pleasantries and jawing, in alphabetical exclamations and belches of satisfaction. Of evaluating my emotions by the number of my arterial pulsations, of selling myself for the price of an exclamation mark, of sticking labels on my subconscious. I was sick of watching my own burial, sick of their processions, of their praises, of their sneers, sick of playing the masters of funeral ceremonies, sick of tracking the vital statistics for an article on down-trodden men! Let me tell you as it was told to me a story of Oscar Wilde: he was making ready to jump in the Seine—unless it was the Thames—when he noticed, along the parapet, a second figure staring at the whirlpools of the river. —"Are you also a suicide?— Oh! no... Me, I'm a barber's boy." And Wilde went back to sleep, perhaps with the barber's boy. It's the barber's boys who are right!

But I had got the habit of despairing love. Daily I saw the image of her young companion, blond as a Greek God, the folding divan whose springs leave their imprint on you, the saucepan evaporating its pretexts of coffee, the monstrous afternoon of the love which we had made. She did not speak a word; I imagined myself to have vanquished her. The silence to which she had constrained me only became more cruel! The letters I sent her more impossible: "This will be, Simone, my last letter..." which I have not had the courage to post.

I had only spoken Simone's name. I would have liked to put this name alone in a book which would have astonished the world after my death. My letters are smoking. You have delivered me from my memory, Daniele—for what reason delivered me? I wanted to know that she was pure, to love, Daniele, not to be loved!

⁂

Seventy-five francs. M. Blache, the cashier, will goggle at me: "You mis-judge yourself! At your age, young man..." At my age he must have been impotent. He is ignorant that one can starve, having a tailor's taste and *need* of first-class consideration. In any case starve is inexact. *Dis*-cipline one's starvation. One becomes terribly used to it. Two metro tickets a day—the rest on foot. An ersatz, saccharine coffee from the opposite stall rather than the other one, since the owner does the serving and there's no need to add a tip. No newspaper—my colleague has one. A slice of bread, cheese, fruit—I'm no longer hungry, my stomach has contracted. I won't manage to swallow this dinner, and I'll amputate 1.500 francs from my budget, a reprisal.

It is in this way that I have begun to think like a machine.

Then, my intelligence surprised itself at intellectual scruples. Scruples about working with asses, for asses. Scruples about doing asses' work. Scruples about irritating others as much as they irritated me. About contributing to the lousy domination of a society I had taken seriously.—"A heap of crap!" concluded my colleague at the office. M. Blache, who bored him to tears with his drivel, was a heap of crap. "Good-bye, old man..."—he turned to me: "What a lot of crap!" I couldn't be worth much more, for him, than another heap of crap. We heard, at that moment, the habitual apoplectic tones from the secretary's office: "Get a move on!" and Mme Letourneur began to go the rounds of the offices to protest and to let her buttocks be tweaked. M. de Saint-Guillaume scorned her, even more than his protector the Republic, on whom he expended his jets of nicotined spittle. The accountant devoured the complete works of Pierre Benoit—"A beautiful style!"—lent to him by the assistant manager, a member of the Felibrige and a Captain in the Reserves. "I was in the Army Service Corps during the war!" M. Cyprien collected fag-ends, meditatively, and M. Gaston decorations for his friends, solemn blockheads and radical-socialists. I pass over the maniacs who gather at 8:30, the garish ties of the pederast general secretary, the black tie of the director in mourning, the arrogant stupidity of the typists and porters, the petty informers, etc... A collection of men-asleep-on-their-feet for masochistic ratepayers. The worst of it is that I had among them some real friends, that I was someone of importance for quite a few people, and that I couldn't manage to do absolutely nothing. On leaving M. Blache, I decided to live one week correctly and... the following month I knocked on his door again.

Seventy-five francs. Daniele will pay for this dinner. Only too happy to show the superiority of a spoilt child; a snob, a mythomane. She has successively declared herself a medical student, a journalist, an eligible-young-girl and "Ssh! it's a secret!"... I had a letter from her a few hours before our meeting yesterday: "I know, my dear Jacques, how much you want me not to impose myself and my character on you any longer... I know too that the reasons you give me are perfectly valid. I understand your state of mind very well but what I haven't admitted is the fashion, the detachment with which you have expressed your thoughts. From this, under this immediate impression, come the things I have told you of, that today I can regret. Not because my impression is different, but because the very idea of not seeing you again is insufferable.

"Thanks to you, I am no longer a mere instrument in the hands of an invisible God to give him, at his disposal, one more creature, destined to serve and glorify him.

"Is it ridiculous of me to send you this message? Are you utterly void of the slightest feeling? We will still be friends, joined by our common fate...

"Everything that isn't stupid is sad, everything that isn't sad is stupid..."

And I only kept our appointment because of this letter. We contented ourselves with a political discussion. Daniele is an incredible reactionary; I was piqued. We spent the day with Jean-Pierre. Françoise was there, and others to whom I was indifferent. We exchanged reminiscences of college and I told them the story of my mathematics teacher. From October 1st to June 30th, one forelock hanging over his cheek, shivering in his overcoat, a quarter of an hour late, he wrote an equation on the blackboard and allowed us 45 minutes to resolve it. The same equation from October 1st to June 30th, I never resolved it—admittedly he never collected the papers. The same equation for all the classes he kept back. The boys threw stinking pellets, paper-mache, yelled—he heard only the uproar from the next class and complained about it to his colleagues. At 4 o'clock, his mother would be hanging about the grille: "Well, my child, has it been alright?" She wore a wig and took it off in the street to scratch her scalp. He was about

60 years old and would always be her child... I'd stuck a tin-tack on his chair, the tender region... The eternal formula disposed of, he pricked his buttocks. Not a jump, not a gesture, forty pairs of eyes were trained on him. And were astonished, interrogated me. And then did not understand that the mathematics teacher had no blood in his buttocks. When the tears fell down his cheeks there was an explosion: "He was crying, the little one, mother's child. How sweetly he cried!" We learned on the way out that his mother had died suddenly. I told them the story dreaming of the young girl in the third form whom I had invited, Thursday, to a tea-shop, and who turned up with her mother, and of her mother who begged me to ask my own to her bridge-parties. I told them the story looking at Françoise who looked at me and Daniele who looked at us.

"Obviously, that sort of thing's no joke..."

"Everything that isn't sad is stupid, said Jean-Pierre, and everything that isn't stupid is sad..."

⁂

Why, Daniele, have you robbed me of Simone? Why have you made me used to you? Why have I known you? Daniele, why didn't you come, at seven o'clock, to the rue de l'Odéon?

I am afraid, Daniele : of forgetting you, of learning again, of living again the unknown, of this phrase of your letter which intoxicates me like a bolero, of being alone and of not being alone, of being unable to write any more, of becoming disgusted with writing, except this story or above all this story—I don't know, any more...

II

It's six months since I've made love! I would like at last to meet a boy who pleased me! Be nice: buy me a sandwich. I'm as hungry as a wolf; I've come from the theatre and I haven't eaten.

At the same time as she gave out these phrases she sat down next to Jacques and timed her feverishness to movements of the knees against those of the young man. He considered her with amusement. She was pretty, her hair trailing over her sweater, pulled in at the waist by maroon slacks. She had been introduced to him, five minutes earlier, by a friend, who was now swaying in the arms of a tart from St-Germain-des-Prés, completely tight.

The animal odour of the dive and the obsessiveness of the swing records befuddled him. He enquired timidly:

"What play are you in?"

What play? Oh, God,—an infamous play, a fiasco above all! But she had been noticed by the critic, good in her rôle, in her rôle of chambermaid—better than that: a revelation! She caressed the jagged cutting:

"You know, if I had wanted to sleep with the producer!... a slow-fox?"

Jacques didn't dance. She plunged into the seething humanity. Spasmodically he saw her, against a brunette with rings round her eyes. Cocasse!

Between times the piano, which had been substituted for the gramophone, discharged a broadside throaty and sonorous.

"Not so loud! Not so loud! bawled the barmaid, I'll shut down!"

The 'actress' sat down, silently. A cheerful group had just settled itself next to them. After a moment or two one of the men took on the girl. He called himself a grocer, smoothing his oiled moustache, to the amusement of the women whom he pretended were his sisters; his brother—an innocent with a sophisticated air—helped him in his business. Jacques stared at the beetles projected on the walls, enlarged to giant-size until there was only one. His friend was trying to shake off a fat little man who feasted his eyes on him while he recounted a succession of appalling stories. A poet in a cloak, sandals on his bare feet, sat down near him. Among a group of loafers and wastrels, a tall and hysterical woman was searching feverishly through a directory, and, putting her handbag behind the bar, between two bottles, threw herself then into the turmoil, to repeat, five minutes later, the same ritual.

"It's amusing! Let me tell you..."

Jacques wasn't listening. He went towards the staircase. Behind the door, the hysterical woman of a moment ago was trying to violate an American.

A gust of air.

When he went down again the dive was almost empty. The last metro had gone.

"Are you coming with me?"

She had made a date for the next day with the film actor who had been playing the grocer. No fool. She'd guessed immediately.

Fortunately she didn't live far away. They went up all three, careful not to make a noise.

"Remember, father's on the other side!"

She whistled a tune before drawing the curtains. But the students on the other side were asleep. And father?

The room was more than bohemian. A very low ceiling. A saucepan of milk stagnated on a stove in the "dressing room". The furniture was her own, and she paid only 80 francs a month. Her 200 francs a day just let her eat a few sandwiches, and feed her dog every two days. A strange dog; a German shepherd, of an ambiguous colour, lying obscenely on its back.

"A little milk?"

They sat down on the couch. She looked through her collection of photos and cuttings.

"A friend I was very fond of. A pederast I converted. My fiancé..."

He died at Dachau in 1944. Since then she had had very few adventures. Jacques became excited at the snaps in bathing-slip, at the edge of the Mediterranean, the previous year. And the other who had stayed!

This was a poem she had written. She recited these sad things ingenuously, so ingenuously they were taken with pity.

"It's late, we must go home."

She had to take her dog out. Jacques had a brainwave.

"I'll take you to lunch tomorrow at midday."

"O.K. Come and call for me."

"See you tomorrow."

They left in a taxi, for they lived together. 4 o'clock. Jacques had never had so little rest. He made some tea, lit a cigarette, opened a book and waited for the dawn of Sunday. There's nothing like a good mass to put you on form. Jacques took in three, one after the other.

Clean-shaven, alert in his blue suit, he plunged into the metro. An hour early; he would catch her as she rose from bed.

She was still there, with a headache. Jacques must let her sleep. He armed himself with a jug to fetch her milk at the corner dairy. He came back empty-handed: the shop was shut.

Jacques didn't dare.

"Sit near me."

Jacques caressed her hands paternally. She uncovered, from the sheets, a breast pink and moist.

"Massage me a little to wake me."

He threw off the blanket and complied. The awakening accentuated the beating of his heart. Brusquely he got up and drew the curtains.

She sat up, white and rigid.

"Ah! no—not that! Go away!"

The first storm exhausted, she confided:

"Don't be angry with me. It's physical. I was sincere, last night. I am always sincere. And then, at the last moment... The doctor told me it was constitutional. I took care of myself. I ought to have a child... so I tried. Impossible. I'm terribly unhappy about it; I could have earned my living very easily if I'd given in to all the men who wanted me; I could have had some splendid engagements. Here, give me an aspirin; in that cabinet."

He searched about. A collection of sulphonamides. He was well out of it!

"We are friends?"

"Friends!"

However he didn't ask her to lunch. He would see her again at the bar. They promised.

She wasn't seen again. He became anxious.

"Little Monique? Don't you know? She committed suicide!"

Why didn't Jacques invite her to lunch—in spite of it?

III

He was sitting on the folding stool which he had ferreted out of the dustbin, or squatting rather, on his heels Turkish-fashion. As much as he had simulated drunkenness, jumping about, crying, delirious, his own excitement had dominated him—but now the alcohol mounted in him, closing his eyes and paralysing his limbs. "The open air does him good," thought the others... I alone knew that he was really drunk.

For I knew him! Last night, he had only thrown the lifebelt into the Seine after he knew there was no-one in the vicinity; he had only bent the driving-mirror on the lorry because he saw the man asleep; he had only broken the glass in the pub and collapsed on to the table because he was certain I would pay for the glass. This comedy was necessary to him, to strike the attitudes of this drunken character corresponding to his pride in being a precocious failure. The misfortune was that people, feigning laughter, took him seriously.

I had left him on the edge of the pavement and taken refuge on the bench. Not imagining anything, not looking for a meaning in this idiot soirée, this expectation of a hypothetical surprise party, in this chic area, with a drunkard on my hands.

The landlady answered promptly enough for us not to have to ring twice. As for the others and their invisible host, they could go hang themselves elsewhere! I suggested:

"Now we only have to leave each other and go home."

"Wait a bit..."

No-one stirred. Then:

"Ah! There you are! Ah! Listen, old man..."

"We stayed till ten o'clock. You didn't come. We went to have a drink in a club near here..."

"And your pals?"

"There were only five of us...What! It fizzled out. They left. Go up anyway; there must be a few half-bottles and some sandwiches left."

The studio was very modern, ornamented with some Picasso and Matisse. On a table in front of the window, the remains of the wine and some half-filled plates. I got hold of some bread and a few slices of sausage and sank onto the divan.

At that moment I noticed HIS presence. The thing was, not to present oneself. A tall fellow, very smart.

Our host, with a vaguely Tcheko-slovak accent, and he, went through a folder of charcoal-sketches. The Tcheko-slovak must have been talented.

"Got any cash?"

The informality didn't surprise me.

"You'll find out why later—got any cash on you?"

I answered that I had, without looking.

We left and found ourselves together in a taxi, the drunk, the man, and I.

"We'll go into a bar on the Champs-Élysées... You'll bet that I'll eat the razor-blades... and we'll drink the money."

I didn't understand exactly... and rejoined them on the Avenue, drunk throwing pebbles at a street-lamp.

We met a friend of mine on the Champs-Elysées. An engineer I knew through a mutual favour. The man showed him the act immediately. Crack! Crack! The blade disappeared in his mouth like a square of chocolate. He gulped down a mouthful of saliva and rubbed his hands.

"That's only a beginning! Give me a pin..."

He pierced the skin of his neck and the lobes of his ears. Not a grimace—not a drop of blood. My friend the engineer gave him 20 francs before leaving us, excusing himself.

The drunkard raised hell again on the Champs-Élysées, interpolating the passers-by and the prostitutes.

We came across a pimp.

"If you're trying to provoke me there'll be some explaining!"

"Because I tell you I eat razor blades!"

This bastard of a drunkard excited them:

"Because he tells you he eats razor-blades..."

"Listen, it's lucky you're drunk!"

"I tell you I eat razor-blades!"

...Because he ate some!

He munched two, in succession. The pimp acknowledged:

"Here, alright! I take my hat off to you!"

We went on with our stroll, the man and the pimp, the drunkard and I, arm in arm.

It was one o'clock in the morning. The bars were closed. The last was evacuating the final revellers through half-drawn shutters.

A new position at the edge of the pavement. A client shrugged his shoulders.

⁂

I read an article in the paper this morning on the man-who-ate-razor-blades. He died of it.

⁂

The halo round the streetlamps, in the slow grey frost encircling them, gave to the pavingstones and figures a prodigal aspect, confounding their outlines to the most penetrating examination. Gathering their thousand vibrations together until they beat with one heart, even these run down under anguish. The halo of the lights like an eternity, the mirror of a separated world, which did not yet know itself.

The two young men had turned aside: "So what are we, are we bums?"

He subsided into the jolting of the train, see-sawing from one side to the other of his shadow that was insulated from alcohol, and passed a hand through their hair: "'paren'ly not"—a serpentine gesture over the nape—"long hair, 'say—li' that"—sliding an index finger over the spinal column—"say, ri' down th' back! li' that..." His right palm enfolded his left fist with an obscene smack—

It was a worker, a good honest fellow of a worker who had the right to get pissed, a proletarian authentically proletarian from the proletariat who... *yes, yes, alright!* They got out at Clichy, and turned to accost another couple:

"We're workers, we are, we don't like bums."

⁂

Jacques bit to blood the pale blue cushion of the divan.

It was a need of identification which drew me to him and made his presence just so USELESS to me as the identification was complete. For me his presence is a more or less provisional means of reconstituting, in echo, my own character. And I suffered from having found nothing there, of being quite unable to renew it between the contacts and the ruptures. There resides the secret of Claude. An immense possibility of welcome, his reserve of the stranger without mystery, his liberty. But I acquired the best of myself. I wondered if his absolute availability wasn't a parade and a system. I KNOW now that it is above all ASTONISHING, that his unseizable combustion of flames without source is all the explanation. With the way in which his Kafka-esque sense of the tragic can be disconcerting when it disappears into myth.

⁂

The terrace winked its eyes of néon and I felt normal. Of my normality : my own; that of the others had become unbearable—"It's ridiculous, at your age, with all these wastrels." At my age, however, she found it necessary to call me kid in front of everyone, and to buy me flowery shirts because they were in fashion.

"Read The Scullion! The Un-political paper!"

Man or woman? In this district you were never quite sure. She flaunted a roulette whistle, a cap, a stone-grey suit, without having much faith in it. She was part of the décor, with the bonnet of the car garlanded with autographs, the portrait artists, the beggars and peanut vendors.

"France-Soir" announced that a town in Korea no-one had heard of had been taken by the South. "Ce Soir" contradicted it in heavier print. Beside him a couple of office-boys gossiped or admired according to the variations in the passers-by. Jacques felt himself at ease and ordered a coffee.

The room inside refused to abet his mood. The waiters slackened their pace, diminished their glances, but that reassured them: something was really going to happen. They made a date for the following morning. Sacha was re-reading his text.

I will be the first to... Our names will cover the newspaper headlines and soon hundreds will follow us, having realized that there is no other philosophy...

"Existentialists! The office-boy underlined with a jeer; people who wear black shirts so the dirt doesn't show!"

An old woman, not tipsy, whines from all the retching that alcohol has bequeathed her, an old woman with one eye watery and the other fixed, absurd, her clothes profusely torn—to whom all the bar-women say, "I've stood enough of you tonight!" wondering why they don't have pity on her; an arrogant old woman returning to mime the gestures of a sleepwalker. She resembles Europe. She listens. Round her the young feel healthy. They drink hot wine at the expense of some sententious clown who considers quite sincerely they are fools because they don't give a stuff for the priests—"Don't worry, pop, we're here for the fun of it!" He has the accent of Beziers; and isn't perturbed when the man pretends to spank the girl, who in turn pretends to yowl. They are nice. The Egyptian plays nicely at backgammon. *The old woman goes out into the rain and I would like to write a poem since I no longer want to make love. I watch. It's less complicated. I have to wait another hour before going back to the hotel, to be decent—"I have slept at some friends' place..." The benzodrine threads my impressions on a string. The old woman resembled Europe. I'm fed up with Europe, but I'm afraid, now, of that old woman.*

The young man was hungry. Jacques bought him a sandwich at the bar; the ham stuck out of the corner of his suddenly tender lips. *I had said "good-bye". I'm fond of saying "good-bye" at the moment when people least expect it—one of my rare liberties!*

I was mistaken! I am always mistaken, only recognising others when it is too late. Doubtless because I conceive them too much in my own image.

—Be seated, I am Death! said that Sunday death. I look like her, tonight. But she only came to spend a few days vacation with the living... The same look, the same gestures, the same voice—and yet the light shines on them differently. We have endured and are killed in this world where man must always kill something to survive. Where things kill themselves like men. We have endured. Clothed in habits against life. They were there, far off, waiting for us: "Come to us!" Incapable of feeling ourselves elsewhere, between their memory and their promised heat. And who do you think we are? the absent habitudes said to me. Coming to us empty and exhausted you bore us all, we want to live with you as masters, and you disrobe each of your joys, before abandoning yourself to life which will take you as quick as the sun for the greatest derision and the greatest anonymity —the absent habits said to me.

My room has no window now
And my forehead is covered with clouds
My room is empty
And my forehead is covered with clouds

Madame d'Hetremont was a poppy-coloured stain among her friends. Her virility overcame them: "I wrote to Sartre; he hasn't replied. What an ill-bred man he is! Besides, one has only to read his books..." They had just discovered "existentialism" and didn't understand that it was they who were the attraction. The Danish painter trembled with laughter and jabbered out his germano-franco-anglo-spanish whose accents he stressed according to the nationality of his interlocutors. The barge —Jim—the cat—the young man—Madame d'Hetremont... Jacques was reassured believing himself superior to this humanity, his vanity was saved.

Sacha was already re-reading the newspaper captions. Jacques only nodded to Claude; he was tired of these meetings, these scenes, of these people whose idea of him he disliked. *I won't come back tomorrow.*

⁂

An immense rent has happened in me, liberating me of all constraint, as I rush at the same time towards people and things: for three days I have loved a girl called Geneviève, and who loves me. And who looks like her name. I don't know if I am really a convalescent, but I know that whatever happens, nothing will hold for me the horror of the past, I know that we won't cease to love each other... Perhaps I will be with her until I die. Death will be in front of me—no longer behind.

We were, another very plain girl and myself, sitting at the corner of the bar. Geneviève came in. I fixed on her own the eyes of a charlatan, and I thought of the eyes of the plain girl.

Then, I played alone with Geneviève, up to the moment when I saw that the charlatanism was over and that I continued nevertheless. On the head of an Eliacin curly and grave, feminine however, we were disturbed in the depths of a look at the same time frank and serenely tender, of a supreme naïveté and of a supreme receptivity, a two-fold being so moulded of flesh and sense and intelligence, that I was once more astonished. She is 20 years old and is alive. She does not look like Danièle.

I'm not astonished any more. The next evening I met her again. I went with her to the Ile Saint-Louis. I held her arm, first. In front of the steps of the prefecture of police we sat down on a bench, I took her hand and slowly, very slowly, I kissed her on the mouth. I felt then that I loved her, becoming amazed at that of my sex distending near a woman.—Her. I remember a cat whose paws over-burdened the trees' shadow, and the silence of a devastated city. One must have come from this to marvel that he has grasped so little of the fullness to tears of the world: TO BE ABLE to place one's lips on other lips in FULL daylight! We walked... Saint-Michel — Port-Royal — Montparnasse — Sèvres-Babylone—a taxi came and took us home—a servant's room on the 7th floor. I think of the night of Pagliero in "Dédé at Anvers", but must not. And then, like the cats, we loved each other.

I said I feared for her, for myself, returning to my weakness. She said it was of no importance since she loved me, and I caressed her eyelids: then I understood it was no longer important, and was no longer afraid.

⁂

I rediscover everything with her, starting from her. We haven't left each other for two days. I am writing tonight for we made love all last night and she has left to sleep... Perhaps I will commit suicide... because of her, not of myself, now.

Re-read the "Nourritures terrestres" and understood their untranslatable health.

Fear of not loving Geneviève ENOUGH.

Geneviève, the phrases of love that I expressed have no more meaning for me.

Geneviève, they lied without wanting to lie.

Fear of being able to love no other woman but Geneviève. "I can only love those who resemble me..." She finds herself among those and I don't know whether I should rejoice in it.

Fear of touching no-one else but her shadow... Fear of losing it.

Of submitting to the fear...

Of realizing out of what pride my passions are undertaken.

A few days of separation calm and assure my love for her. Reassure me. Reassure me of the temptations I keep on meeting with, show me—oh how cruelly!—that this love is exclusive in measure of its strangeness. I mustn't look for any more explanations. I have not attempted experience, and will only possess that of having tried not a vocation, but an adventure, and of having missed it for it was, at heart, but a ruse of Narcissus. Now he has thrown himself to the waves and all the sea is his kingdom.

⁂

Sitting on the long seats at a café with some American friends. Unexpectedly Geneviève arrives, accompanying some wreck of a fellow, young, obviously drunk, discoloured locks fringing his forehead.

"A loafer" she says. The loafer comes up to our table, bidding her follow. His familiarity makes me choke. She looks at him as if hypnotised, rises, sits down again, while he glares at us menacingly. A friend calls him over. He comes back a few minutes later, and his voice is so imploring and so miserable at the same time that our fists clench in disgust; my hands tremble. Before I have had time to consider one of the Americans has already overturned the table and knocked the loafer down. Geneviève is more dazed than I. As prompt as he, some policemen take them off to the commissariat, the American and his friends; of whom one soon reappears. "We ought to go down there," repeats Geneviève. I beg her to stay, but all at once feel cowardly and go along to the commissariat, which the others are leaving (including the one who was knocked down. Geneviève disappears with him.)

The loafer must have some other errand. "You know: there are a lot of interesting people here..." some homespun Eastern prophet tells me. They have used up their 5 franc pieces in the slot machine, and lit a cigarette. An alcoholic and despairing whore comes after me. The whore tears her dress. Second riot. Two Algerians who had been dozing in C's car pretend they have been robbed by a young tourist from New York, who calmly denies it. C becomes annoyed in turn. Bodies roll on the pavement. The New-Yorker's jaw is bleeding. Six of us in the car interrogate a sleep-walker (putting it on, more or less). We leave him at 9 in the morning.

To be told to anyone.

Geneviève smiles. She begs me to leave with her for Chambery... and doesn't know if she will come back this evening...

Each day more flies from me. I refuse to go to the cinema with her on the pretext of a headache. TO GO WITH HER! I dread and hope for the end of the affair.

⁂

Let her not love me at all. But I can't forgive her for having the same idea of me which, because of her, I had assumed before the others. She has vanished "just like that" with a Swedish painter.—Not see her again?

Letter from Geneviève: "I am writing to you. It is 8 o'clock in the evening. I'm in an hotel in the middle of the desert, open to every feeling,—among others for you tears of happiness that the night is getting blacker. What lassitude. I meet you in almost unfrequented places. IN MY SLEEP."

I re-read Daniele's letter. The papers announce a strong police offensive against Saint-Germain-des-Prés.

⁂

The narrow bridge vibrated like a rainbow in the last of the sun over the quay. Jacques felt it vibrate under his feet even more thinking of the return, a few hours later, after alcohol. "Come on, hurry up and get the drinks ready!"

And Jim dived with a curious freedom into the world of the barge.

Jim is free. Because he knows himself. Because he is two years younger than I. Because of that I cannot be and I resent it. He introduced me to the barge-master and a representative of the company. Cannot grasp humanity's appearance at all.

The fondant had been bubbling on the coal for a day. Jim steeped it in wine as it evaporated without achieving the right consistency—"I got the recipe from a Swedish girl at Nice." The fondant waited, Jim waited, Jacques waited (The Seine is endless, and the post-card sightseers —Jim on the parapet—his gesture of a child who does the cooking—the bridge—comma in the silence—the barge-master and the company representative—the night now and Jim alone with Jacques.)

Dead beauty. All beauty means nothing to me if it is not sensible. We keep vigil over an absence between three petrol lamps. I would like to kill a cat... Last monday, someone offered me a cat, which I accepted because I had long wanted to kill a living thing. I took it home, and tied one paw to a long ribbon fixed to the ceiling. When I came back, about three o'clock in the morning, its paw was quite swollen, and the pain had made it tear up whatever was within reach of its teeth. It refused to eat or drink, and I could find no trace of excrement about it... During an hour, I massaged it until the paw returned to normal (and I was sincerely frightened in case it died). Then, I laid it next to me, in bed. Its eyes, in the gloom, passed from a fiery red to an emerald green with strange rapidity. It had stopped mewing, I thought it was going to die, and, while I was near to crying over the animal, I felt myself on the look-out for a pretext, even its suffering, to accomplish my wish to kill it. I remember also the three kittens I had drowned, when I was eight years old, by plunging them in *the soapy water of a wash-house, and I was near to crying over my own cruelty and my own remorse. I want to be cruel and I haven't the courage. Yesterday at the cinema I shuddered over the retrospective image of those savagely defiled by the light of torches, in Nuremberg, the charnel-houses of Buchenwald. It was a film. The barge—the petrol-lamps—Jim and I —the cat—that would make a film.*

translated from the French of Daniel Mauroc

HAWTHORNE'S PRAYER

Lord, can this age of Salem harbor love...?
The unpretense of bleak scantling houses
Leagued in irregularity—
Blank gable-stretched peninsula
In grip of kelp and the bright coral-moss,
From an almshouse upto Gallows Reach—
Harbor a love, Lord, drawn from bloody roots
My fathers drove into this wind-tolled land?
Two centuries passed since my first father
Crossed the border of the forest fortress,
To where his sons were got, bred and sailed
From; and then keeled home at last and died.
Slowly their stones sank past the weather's eye,
As condemed houses in the street cover
Halfway to the eaves with rising rubble.
My fathers' bones fell to the rising dust,
Their hearts' blood counted drop by drop,
Till the fostering earth should father me.
Man and son, past two hundred dying years,
They followed sea: the master
Quit the wheel and quarterdeck for homestead,
As darker sons took place before the helm,
Before the salt and tracking gales
That drove their dying fathers home to earth.
The sons, racked through time in tempests of age
Returned from the sea to age, die,
And left blood to the natal pile.

Through years the flesh and soil grew kin,
By weight, by instinct, if never by love.
And no bantling heart keeps this truce with earth,
The grange falling and the clippers dismantled:
Dust, and dead plains of site and sediment,
Airs that stir a sediment of dread,
The east wind, and the blood and flesh:
As the Gardener to Adam's tortured seed.
And even here the land wears out in dust,
Under blood tides.
And if my sons strike root and lay
Their flesh in bright and unaccustomed land,
My love keeps sympathy of dust
For dust: my fathers' vanished stature
Haunts and stains my burden, my blood bonded
To justify this prayer with presences,
Grim mantled and steeple crowned,
Bearing Bible and sabres through green woods,
Treading the unworn streets
These ghosts of sea and war. And I unknown,
My darkened name not heard here. My face
Unseen. I wear their cast
(Seaman, judge, good and evil Puritan,
Plague to Quakers.) They set torches
To wizards, whose witch-blood our dust
Dyes the last marrow trace
Of our dried bones deep under Charter Street.
Do they repent, or keep alive
Eternal groan? Yet I pray shame
Upon me, before I turn. For us
I plead that every red curse incurred,
As I know, with marks of the race—
For centuries, be now, and always outcast.

— William Redding

[*This is the second part of a long autobiographical poem the first part of which appeared in* MERLIN NUMBER ONE *under the title* THE MONKEY.]

II. THE SPARROWS*

My father gave me good nickels
for tearing out the sparrows' nests;
he said they were in his hair,
and their clutter in the drains
was something encumbering his brain,
and their chatter in the eaves
inhabited even his dreams.

Frantically I worked!
I climbed up high on a ladder
to the roof like the brow
of my father's house;
I dug into the pipes and tiles
with my fingers and my little nails.

It was like digging in my father's ear,
but suddenly it turned so still:
something was alive here
in the breeding gloom,
huge, unwinding—
I tore out my hand and
with it came fuzz, some egg,
and a baby with a sticky flesh,
a feeling which I flung away from myself.

Then I lay in my bed like something left,
hearing far away the lesson of the ladder,
and my father came and seeing my face—
never mind, he said, when you try—
he took up my hand and there he placed
very seriously my good nickel's wage,
like putting an egg back in its nest.

All night I remained out there in my hand,
begging the sparrows to come take what was theirs.

— William Burford

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* An earlier version of this poem has appeared in *Poetry*.

COMMENTARY the sixth canto of Ezra Pound*

This *Canto* celebrates certain Troubadours of Provence and Theseus, peer of Greek chivalry.

What have you done, Odysseus,
  We know what you have done...
And that Guillaume sold out his ground rents
(Seventh of Poitiers, Ninth of Aquitain).
  'Tant las fotei com auzirets (5)
  'Cen e quatre vingt et veit vetz...'

The two lines quoted are from a song by Guillaume. In it he tells that as he wandered in Auvergne he met two ladies, and how he played, and they thought him mute; and—since a mute is not dangerous—took him with them for pleasure. At their request he stripped and was clawed by their cat as a test of his muteness. This test he passed, remained with them for eight days, and

Fucked them as much as you shall hear
One hundred and eighty-eight times,
And damn near busted my harness...

The stone is alive in my hand, the crops
        will be thick in my death year...
Till Louis is wed with Eleanor
And had (He, Guillaume) a son that had to wife
The Duchess of Normandia whose daughter (10)
Was wife to King Henry e marie del rei jove...

Vida[1] of Guillaume:

"The Count of Poitiers was one of the best men of court in the world and one of the best tricksters of women and a good man in battle and free with his largesse, and he composed and sang well. And for a long time

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[*] The editor regrets that the publication of the commentary on the first of *The Pisan Cantos* which was announced in MERLIN Number One has had to be postponed until a later issue.

[1] The *Vidas* are the lives of the Troubadors, together with a selection from the work of each. They are contemporary documents and have various modern editors.

he travelled about for the pleasure of double dealing the ladies. And he had a son who married the Duchess of Normandy and he had a daughter who was wife to King Henry of England, mother of the Young King and Richard (the Lion-Hearted) and of the Count Geoffrey of Brittany." Guillaume, Seventh Count of Poitiers and Ninth Duke of Aquitaine, was born in 1071 and died in 1137, reigning from 1086 to his death. He is sometimes called the first Troubador *who brought the song up out of Spain* (see Canto VIII. 1, 156) but though he was certainly one of the first with the 'new-singing' this title is legendary. At his death he was suceeded by his son Guillaume, who, contrary to the *vida* from which lines 11-13 are a quotation, married Aénor of Châtellerault. Their child, Eleanor of Aquitain, married first Louis VII of France (1137-1180), and divorced by him on their return from the second crusade (1154-1189), married, three months later, Henry Plantagenet, later Henry II of England (1154-1189). The first surviving child of her marriage to Plantagenet was a son named Henry, known in Provence as the Young King, for whose death in 1183 Bertrans de Born wrote the Planh 'Si tuit li dol elh plor elh marrimen.' (see Pound: *Collected Shorter Poems*, p. 50.)

Went over sea till day's end[1] (he, Louis, with Eleanor)
Coming at last to Acre. (15)
'Ongla, oncle,' saith Arnaut
    Her uncle commanded in Acre,
That had known her in girlhood
        (Theseus, son of Aegeus)[2]
And he, Louis, was not at ease in that town, (20)
And was not at ease by Jordan
As she rode out to the palm-grove
Her scarf in Saladins cimier.[3]
Divorced her in that year, he Louis,
        divorcing thus Aquitaine. (25)
And that year Plantagenet married her
        (that had dodged past 17 suitors)
Et quand lo reis Lois lo entendit.[4]
        mout er fasché.

Louis and Elanor sailed with the second crusade (1147), landed at Acre and proceeded to Antioch. Eleanor's relations with her young uncle Raymond of Guyenne and Toulouse, at that time Prince of Antioch, upset the pious and ascetic Louis, who through jealousy rejected the tactical advice of Raymond, thus bringing the crusade, sooner than it was destined, to fiasco. Years later Arnaut Daniel was also troubled by an uncle (see sestina in appendix) but there is no evidence for linking his 'oncle' to Raymond. Eleanor had long despised her husband terming

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1. Canto I, line 9.
2. See notes at end of Canto.
3. Helmet.
4. 'And when King Louis heard this
        he was very mad'.

him the 'rotten apple'. She now added to this antagonism by threatening to elope with Saladin, though the latter was only ten years old at the time, and not active in ejecting to Christian barbarians till the third crusade. Returned from the crusade and divorced by Louis, Eleanor, after many suits, wed Plantagenet, so giving that young man an empire from the Orkneys to Spain. Louis had presumed that the lands of her dower would go to his daughters out of her, thus keeping them for the French crown, but this was not the case and he was furious.

> Nauphal, Vexis, Harry joven (30)
> In pledge for all his life and life of all his heirs
> Shall have Gisors, and Vexis, Neufchastel
> But if no issue Gisors shall revert...

Eleanor was adept in encouraging her sons to rebel against their father. The Young King (Harry joven) died of dysentry during one such war. He had been engaged to Margaret of France (daughter of Louis) whose dower had included Neufchastel and Gisors, important castles in the Vexin, a region northwest of Paris. There being no issue, Henry was bound by contract to return these lands to France: this he did not, and had no intention of doing. Louis the feeble complained, but took no action.

> "Need not wed Alix... in the name
> Trinity holy and indivisible... Richard our brother (35)
> Need not wed Alix once his father's ward and...
> But whomso he choose... for Alix, etc...

For many years Alix of France, sister to Margaret, had been engaged to Richard Cœur de Lion. He consistently avoided this union for Alix was not attractive, and whilst ward to his father Henry II had probably been his mistress. When Louis VII died, Phillip Augustus came to the French throne, intent on picking a quarrel with Henry. The defection of Richard from Alix provided one, the failure to return Gisors and Neufchastel another excuse. Henry refused both these claims and Phillip began a profitable war on the English lands in France. He was halted in this by the news of Saladin's capture of Jerusalem. Filled with crusading zeal he was persuaded by the Church to abandon the campaign against Henry and to sign the treaty of Azay-le-Rideau, July 4th 1189. His respect for the holy places was rewarded by the surrender of Gracay and Issoudun and a large 'war-contribution' from Henry. A few weeks after the signing of this treaty Henry died. Richard, once crowned, demanded its instant revision, and the crusade would certainly have been postponed but for the ignorance of the common knights, who, fired by piety, demanded Jerusalem as their objective, and refused to fight the momentarily petty fueds of their lords. Phillip and Richard were forced to start the crusade (Decision of Nonancourt Dec. 30th, 1189). Phillip still claimed that Richard must wed Alix the unfancied, but for-bore when he and the Church were paid 10,000 gold marks by Richard, which the latter gained in the happy looting of towns en route to the holy lands.

Eleanor, domna jauzionda[1], mother of Richard,
Turning on thirty years (wd have been years before this)
By river-marsh, by galleried church-porch,
Malemorte, Correze, to whom:
        'My Lady of Ventadour
'Is shut by Eblis in
'And will not hawk nor hunt
        nor get her free in the air
'Nor watch fish rise to bait
'Nor the glare-wing'd flies alight in the creek's edge
'Save in my absence, Madame.
        "Que la lauzeta mover"
'Send word I ask you to Eblis
        you who have seen that maker
'And finder of songs so far afield as this
'That he may free her,
        who sheds such light in the air.'

From the *Vida* of Bernart of Ventadorn:
"(Bernart is at Ventadorn where the Vicount Eblis III has received him well.). ...And the Vicount of Ventadorn had a wife, young noble and gay. And she adorned herself with Bernart and his songs and fell in love with him and he with her, so that he made his songs and poems about her, of the love he had for her and of her worth. Their love lasted a long time before the Vicount or anyone else perceived it, and when the Vicount perceived it he chased Bernart away, and had his wife locked up and guarded. And the lady had Bernart told that he was free of his vow, so that he might go far away from that region.

"And he went away and came to the court of the Duchess of Normandy *(Eleanor)* who was young and of great worth, and who was a great one for merit and honour and poems of praise. And she liked Bernart's songs very much, and she welcomed him with enthusiam. And he stayed a long time at her court, and fell in love with her and she with him, and made many good songs about her. And while he was with her the King Henry of England took her to wife and took her away from Normandy and led her to England..." Eblis III (d. 1170) son of Eblis II known as, the 'singer' married first Margaret of Turenne (d. 1148) and after Alais, daughter of William I of Montpellier; which of these ladies was loved by Bernart is not certain. The lyric passage beginning 'My Lady of Ventadorn...' is an embroidery by Pound on the facts of the *vida*, except for the line "Que la lauzeta mover" or "Quant vey lauzeta mover" which is the first line of a poem by Bernart (see appendix). This method is used by Pound in several of the early poems, *Marvoil*, *Near Perigord* &, and in several other passages in the Cantos. Eleanor married

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[1] Gay-lady.

Plantagenet in 1152, but remained in Normandy till 1154, when he was crowned King of England. Bernart's visit to her court must have been in those years. As Eblis's first wife died in 1148 it is safe to presume, as Pound does, that is was Alais whom Bernart loved and for whose release he petitioned Eleanor. As far as is known Eblis III was not a Troubador, and there is a possible confusion between Eblis III and Eblis II (maker/And finder of songs) for the latter was famous as a singer though none of his work has come down to us.

E lo Sordels si fo di Mantovana[1],
Son of a poor knight, Sier Escort,
And he delighted himself in chançons
And mixed with the men of the court
And went to the court of Richard Saint Boniface
And was there taken with love for his wife
Cunizza, da Romano,
That freed her slaves on a Wednesday
Masnatas et servos, witness
Picus de Farinaris
and Don Elinus and Don Lipus
sons of Farinato de' Farinati
'free of person, free of will
'free to buy, witness, sell, testate.'
A marito subtraxit ipsam...

From the *Vida* of Sordello:
"Sordello was from Mantovana, from a castle called Got (Goito), and his father was a poor knight Sier Escort. And he had a pleasing person, and was a good singer and trobaire, and a great lover; but a double dealing scoundrel he was with ladies and with the nobles who took him in. And he came to an understanding with Milady Cunizza, the sister of Sir Eccelin and of Sir Alberic of Romano, who was the wife of the Count of St Boniface, with whom he was staying. And at Eccelin's request her took her off from her husband and went on the road."
Sordello, a personage of particular importance in the Cantos, has several long and contradictory *vidas*. His affair with Cunizza, is given full notice in Canto XXIX and will be commentated at that point. Cunizza is also referred to on various occasions in *The Pisan Cantos:* here it is sufficient to say that Pound using the 'direct method' i.e. quotation from contemporary documents, gives fact of Cunizza's benevolence in old age to her father's servants. The phrase *A marito subtraxit ipsam* occurs in the chronicle of Rolandini, while lines 54-59 are out of a Sordello *vida.*

Dictum Sordellum concubuisse;[2]
'Winter and Summer I sing of her grace,
As the rose is fair, so fair is her face,
Both Summer and Winter I sing of her,
The snow makyth me to remember her.'

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1. Canto II line. 4.
2. It being said of Sordello that he had lain with her.

Sordello writing a poem to Cunizza:

> Atretan deu ben chantar finamen
> D'invern com fatz d'estiu, segon rason,
> Per c'ab lo freitz voill far gaja canson,
> Que sen pascor de chantar cor mi pren,
> Quar la rosa senbla lei de cui chan,
> Aultresi es la neus del sieu senblan:
> Per qu'en andos deu per s'amor chantar;
> Tant fort mi fai la rosa el neu menbrar.

The line 'Quand ben m'albrir e mon ric pensamen' which is the first of the third stanza of the above poem is the line quoted at the end of Canto XXXVI.

> And Cariels was of Sarlat...
> Theseus from Troezene (75)
> And they wd have given him poison
> But for the shape of his sword hilt.

Elias Cariels was a troubador who worked in silver and gold and would design arms and the patterns upon them. The *vida* says of him; 'ill he sang, ill he composed, ill he played, and worse he spoke. But he was good at writing out words and tunes and much travelled in Roumania'.

Note.

Theseus, born at Troezene, in the court of his maternal grandfather Pittheus. His father was Aegeus the 9th King of Athens. Before leaving Troezene Aegeus buried his sword under a boulder ordering that Theseus must first lift the boulder and find the sword before he came to Athens which would serve to identify him to Aegeus. At the age of sixteen Theseus lifted the boulder and came to Athens, but did not declare himself to his father before he had accomplished various feats. He then went to the shrine of Zeus to purify himself. When he returned to Athens he found the city in a state of confusion. Medea in control of his father ruled in his name. She, hearing of the arrival of this famous stranger, advised the King to have him poisined when at the royal table. To this Aegeus agreed; but, as Theseus was about to drink the potion his father recognised the sword hilt and knew him for son.

—Alan Neame & Christopher Logue

[*The commentators wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Mr. Jared Shlaes who translated the Provençal texts.*]

APPENDIX

ARNAUT DANIEL : *Sestina.*

Lo ferm voler qu'el cor m'intra
no.m pot ges becx escoyssendre ni ongla
de lauzengier, qui pert per mal dir s'arma;
e car no l'aus batr' ab ram ni ab veria,
sivals a frau, lai on non aurai oncle,
iauzirai ioy, en vergier o dins cambra.

Quan me sove de la cambra
on a mon dan sai que nulhs hom non intra,
ans me son tug plus que fraire ni oncle,
non ai membre no.m fremisca, neis l'ongla,
aissi cum fai l'efans denan la veria:
tal paor ai no.l sia trop de l'arma.

Del cors l'i fos, non de l'arma,
e cossentis m'a celat dins sa canbra!
que plus mi nafra.l cor que colps de veria,
car lo sieus sers lai on ilh es non intra.
de lieys serai aissi cum carns et ongla,
e non creirai castic d'amic ni d'oncle.

Anc la seror de mon oncle
non amiei plus ni tan, per aquest' arma!
qu'aitan vezis cum es lo detz de l'ongla,
s's lieys plagues, volgr' esser de sa cambra.
de me pot far l'amors, qu'ins el cor m'intra,
mielhs a son vol qu'om fortz de frevol veria.

Pus floric la seca veria
ni d'en Adam foron nebot ni oncle,
tan fin' amors cum selha qu'el cor m'intra,
non cug qu'anc fos en cors, ni es en arma;
on qu'ilh estey, fors en plass' o dins cambra,
mos cors no.s part de lieys tan cum ten l'ongla.

Qu'aissi s'enpren e s'enongla
mos cors en lieys cum l'escors' en la veria,
qu'ilh m'es de ioy tors e palais e cambra,
e non an tan fraire, paren ni oncle,
qu'en paradis n'aura doble ioy m'arma,
si ia nulhs hom per ben amar lai intra.

Arnautz tramet son cantar d'ongl'e d'onclé
ab grat de lieys que de sa veri' a l'arma,
son Dezirat, qu'a pretz dins cambra intra.

BERNARD DE VENTADOUR: *Canzo.*

Quant vey la lauzeta mover
De joi sas alas contra ray,
Que s'oblida e.s layssa cazer
Per la doussor qu'al cor li vai,
Ai! tan grans enveia m'en ve
De cui qu'eu veya jauzion!
Meravilhas ai, quar desse
Lo cor de dezirier no.m fon.

Ailas! tan cujava saber
D'amor, e tan petit en sai!
Quar eu d'amar no.m puesc tener
Celieys don ja pro non aurai;
Tout m'a mon cor e tout m'a se
E me mezeis e tot lo mon,
Et quan si.m tolc no.m laisset re
Mas dezirier e cor volon.

Anc non agui de me poder
Ni no fui mieus de l'or'en sai
Que.m laisset en sos huelhs vezer
En un miralh que mot mi plai;
Mirals, pus me mirei en te,
M'an mort li sospir de preon,
Qu'aissi.m perdei cum percet se
Lo bels Narcisus en la fon.

De las donas mi dezesper;
Ja mais en lor no.m fiarai,
Qu'aissi cum las suelh captener,
Enaissi las descaptendrai.
Pus vei qu'una pro no m'en te
Ves lieys que.m destrui e.m cofon,
Totas las dopt e las mescre,
Quar be sai qu'atretals se son.

D'aiso.s fa be femna parer
Ma dona, per qu'ieu lo retrai,
Quar non vol so qu'om deu voler
E so qu'om li deveda fai.
Cazutz sui en mala merce,
Et ai ben fait co.l fols en pon,
E no sai per que m'esdeve,
Mas quar trop pogei contra mon.

Merces es perduda per ver,
Et ieu non o saubi anc mai,
Quar cil qui plus en degr'aver
No.n a ges, et on la querrai?
A! quan mal sembla, qui la ve,
Que aquest caitiu deziron,
Que ja ses lei non aura be,
Laisse morir, que no l'aon!

Pus ab midons no.m pot valer
Precs ni merces ni.l dregz qu'ieu ai,
Ni a leys no ven a plazer
Qu'ieu l'am, ja mais no.l o dirai;
Aissi.m part de lieys e.m recre;
Mort m'a e per mort li respon,
E vau m'en, pus ilh no.m rete,
Caitius, en yssilh, no sai on.

Tristans, ges non auretz de me,
Qu'ieu m'en vau caitius, no sai on;
De chantar mi gic e.m recre,
E de joi e d'amor m'escon.

REVIEWS

The Triple Thinkers: *Edmund Wilson, (London, John Lehmann,* 1952, 15/-.*)**

The portrait of the artist drawn by psychoanalysis is that of a sublimated cannibal in whom the ideational fields of looking and eating have been linked and oral incoporation of alien objects has evolved into visual incorporation of images. In this context Edmund Wilson has focused a golden eye on the darkling plain of humanism between the marxist and the freudian hinterlands where art is presumed to be either a secretion of the economic mode of production or a sublimated product of libido. Whether as a mandarin in Greenwich Village, a fellow-traveler in Moscow, or a reader of yellow-backed novels in Paris, his mind has fed on its parochial environment with the aim of transforming into consciousness the widest possible experience.

"What is the artist if not a triple thinker?" wrote Flaubert to Louise Colet, the adventuress who captivated many leading French men of letters during the nineteenth century. Wilson is more concerned with intellectual than aesthetic appraisals and this theme of the artist as thinker provides the unity for the twelve essays in his book. In the essay, *Is Verse a Dying Technique ?*, however, he elaborates the problem of aesthetic systems and detaches poetry from verse by defining it as the most intense, beautifully composed and comprehensive form of literary art. He goes on to say that Flaubert was the first novelist to employ the precision and intensity hitherto associated with verse, and that since then, the use of mixed techniques in poetry *(The Pisan Cantos)* and the novel *(Finnegan's Wake)* has made increasingly academic the old distinction between verse and prose.

The essays on *The Politics of Flaubert* and *The Ambiguity of Henry James* reinterpret these crucial figures in the light of Wilson's heterodoxy which permits him to compare Flaubert and Marx in their damnation of the bourgeois and their attraction to the Hegelian 'Idea' under different guises. In Flaubert's later works the misanthrope defeated the artist as is evident in *Bouvard et Pécuchet* and he finally indicted more than a single class; in fact he projected the decay of his own creative faculties in statements such as, "Never have I felt so colossal a disgust for mankind. I'd like to drown the human race under my vomit."

Henry James shares with Flaubert the artist's patrimony of alienation from the corrupted values of their society. Both have the reputation of purists of the ivory tower school but what is new in Wilson's interpretation is the extent to which he suggests they participated emotionally in events beyond the sphere of personal relations. What is most ambiguous in Henry James is the false psychology of his characters when they are grappling with intimate relationships. He was the victim of what might be called the Boston neurosis of repressed aggression and sexuality—a state of chronic inhibition which explains his preoccupation with immature girls and certain of his images as in the story of *Rose Agathe* in which a man falls in love with a dummy in a Paris shop-window. It may also explain his style with its padding of long abstract formulations through which little chinks of reality emerge like medieval sunlight through a suit of armour.

Despite the deficient experience of Henry James, Edmund Wilson concludes this brilliant essay with the statement that, "Alone among our novelists of the past, Henry James managed to master his art and to practice it on an impressive scale, to stand up to popular pressures so as not to break down or peter out, and to build up what the French call an *œuvre.*"

Edmund Wilson roams at will through the literatures of England, Russia, France and the United States. He retouches an old master with a veneer of psychologizing and during the depression he viewed capitalist democracy as the plaything of the plutocrats but in his book of postwar travels, *Europe Without Baedeker*, he states, "My optimistic opinion is that the United States is politically more advanced than any other part of the world."

No other American critic has the virtuosity of Edmund Wilson.

—George Whitman

Let It Come Down, *by Paul Bowles (John Lehmann,* 1952, 12/6*d.)*

This is a technically disappointing novel, uneven in texture and formally weak, which is at the same time obviously the work of a sensitive and intelligent writer. Since the publication of his first novel ("The Sheltering Sky") and a book of short stories ("The Delicate Prey") he has been damned and praised, always extravagantly and usually for the wrong reasons. As a satirist Bowles is inferior to Aldous Huxley whom he resembles, in depth to D. H. Lawrence whom he resembles, in style to Camus who is the acknowledged master of the contemporary novel of the *extreme situation*.

Paul Bowles, like Sartre, is impressed by the brute absurdity of existence; secure in his knowledge, he takes a ruthless pleasure in depicting the modern sclerosis of ideals. His characters are either constantly being shocked or are already more blasé than any Arab ever was. "Tout existant naît sans raison, se prolonge par faiblesse, meurt par rencontre," and thus his characters leave America, which refuses to recognise itself as absurd, and end absurdly in Africa, dead, raped, or murdering, while in the background the exotic business of Arab girls, köhl and hashish goes on and on. In this sense "Let It Come Down" is thematically repititious, and, as it is his second novel, more disappointing than "The Sheltering Sky." But it is nevertheless an interesting and diverting book written by a writer who is at least sensitive to the dilemma of those people who cannot commit themselves to an absurdity. And there is no point in asking whether the absurdity really exists; when something is felt to be absurd it *is* absurd. Absurdity is relational.

Structurally the novel is weak. The juxtaposition of scenes and characters developed simultaneously, apart or in association with one another, reminiscent of Huxley, Dos Passos, and Sartre, is not managed successfully. At the end of the second book Bowles abandons even the limited complexity he began with and Dyar's personal tragedy is worked out in detail together with that of Thami. We see nothing further of Wilcox, of Hadija, or, what is worse, of Miss Goode. Miss Goode, who plays such an important part in the earlier books, and who is the best drawn of all the characters, is, apart from one indirect reference, left entirely out of Books 3 and 4.

The writing itself is clear enough, and, with a few exceptions (some of the conversations between Dyar and Daisy de Valverde are weak), technically competent; but it is entirely non-experimental and for that reason less significant than that of say Eudora Welty or of Truman Capote, both of whom, at their best, are technically brilliant. There is none of this kind of originality in Paul Bowles; neither is his *malaise* original however deeply it is experienced; if he is original at all it is in his ability to make credible the outlandish acts which are perpetrated in most of his stories. He is a specialist in the outlandishly horrible. In the present novel a motiveless murder is committed. With a hammer the murderer drives a nail into the orifice of his victim's ear.

His books are outlandish, sensational, competently and amusingly written. It is a mistake to damn him for his sensationalism as some critics do. It is certainly a greater mistake to look on it, as some of the young tend to do, as a mark of genius.

⁂

Mr. Nicholas; *by Thomas Hinde. (London, Macgibbon and Kee*, 1952, 12/6d *)*

Thomas Hinde's first novel is concerned with a middle-class English suburban family: father (Mr. Nicholas), mother, and three sons, from the point of view of the eldest of whom, Peter, the story is set, and a number of outside characters who are employed largely as devices against which the family can react; the subsidiary characters do not break loose on their own. It is a critical study of one kind of English family. The bickering conversation whose futile triviality is under-run with annoyance and spite, the points made through perverted righteousness, the lack of nobility apart from the negative restraint of Mrs. Nicholas's wretched attempts to keep the family "happy"—these things demonstrate the awful failure of one aspect of civilisation, the breakdown of communion. The novel presents at the same time the decline and eventual pathetic collapse of Mr. Nicholas and the picture of a young man "adjusting his opinions."

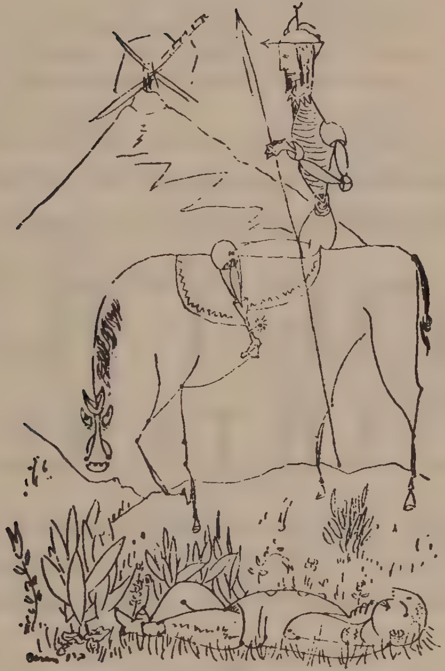
Hinde's style is colloquial and easy—"as you got closer and understood better everything mattered because everything was typical and then it was suddenly a shock to find yourself screaming about a collar stud"—often, as in this quotation, very successful. But it sometimes produces imprecision as it does in the scene between Peter and Julia. He is competent but sometimes boring, and, where he is aware of it, sometimes strained in his attempt to raise the level of intensity. But it is a testimony to this young writer's success that the oppressive little world which he presents is constantly and horrifyingly interesting.

Friends and Vague Lovers: *Jack Dunphy, (Farrar, Straus and Young*, 1952. $3.00*)*

Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* is the kind of measure against which the present novel can be set and of the two books remains the more important. Like the author of *Nightwood*, Mr. Dunphy creates his situations by an economy of words and an astute selection of impressions. Sometimes he is cryptic, suggesting far more than he appears to say : "She raised it (the revolver) to the clear space between her eyes. Pressing the trigger, she fell to her kness asking the air every inch of the way why Jonathan had not left a bullet for her."

The book is about a group of Americans living on an island off the coast of Italy between whom there exist the indefinite relationships implied in the title. One of these relation ships is between Sheridan and Mrs. Markham for whom, since the suicide of her son, life is supposed to be over. Life is not over for her, however, and she succeeds in establishing the kind of relationship with Sheridan which she had with her son; and Sheridan at the end of the book accepts it. It is an interesting development, and Mr. Dunphy handles it competently. He is a clever writer but at the same time, if one can judge from this novel and his last, a very limited one.

—W. R.



NEW CONTRIBUTERS

P. W. Bowles : South African writer hitherto unpublished. Will appear shortly in *Botteghe Oscure.*

Daniel Mauroc : Controversial young French novelist and playwright, at present in Sweden. Albert Camus wrote the preface to *Contre-Amour*, the second part of which, translated from the French, appears in this issue on page 85.

Alan Neame : English poet, at present engaged on an exhaustive commentary on the *Cantos.* Christopher Logue collaborates.

William Redding : American poet living in Paris.

Richard Seaver : Works for a French film company. Has spent over three years in France and considers Beckett to be one of the most significant of modern French writers.

Harold Witt : American poet, at present working in California.

POETRY
QUARTERLY

New poems, reviews of the most important current poetry. Experimental prose and the note books of poets. No wasting assets.

*

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WINTER 1952-53

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LES ÉDITIONS DE MINUIT

MOLLOY
MALONE MEURT
EN ATTENDANT GODOT

by

Samuel Beckett

Some Press Opinions of *Molloy*

"One of the most significant works to appear since the war."
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Maurice Nadeau (*Mercure de France*).

Aux Éditions de Minuit, 7, rue Bernard-Palissy - Paris-5e

EDITORIAL

The editorial statement in MERLIN Number Two has provoked certain misunderstandings. MERLIN has been accused:

(a) of advocating art for art's sake

and (b) of a ludicrous faith "in the very science which will destroy us".

In the first place, the attack on critics for failing to distinguish between the descriptive and expressive functions of language and consequently for writing second-order expression instead of descriptive analysis in no way implied that the critic is precluded from taking up an attitude for or against the content of any particular work of art *so long as the critic recognises that it is an attitude he is taking up*. If a critic fails to recognise this he trafficking in the most dangerous type of metaphysics.

Secondly, the scientist is concerned with "how", not with "why". The scientist *qua* scientist does not commit murder in the name of God, race or creed. That is the province of the metaphysician and of his practical arm and paymaster, the politician. To approve of the methods of science is not necessarily to approve of the effective extermination of the human race. Science is essentially relativistic and tentative; it uses categories which are in a liquid state. Metaphysics, on the contrary is essentially absolutistic and deals dangerously often with transcendent categories which have been allowed to harden. It is symptomatic of the Orwellian situation which exists in the world today that politicians on both sides of the iron curtain cry indignantly for "justice"; both sides claim to be "right" and think they are describing a fact when they call the other "wrong", the east in the name of Marx or "historical necessity", the west even more ambiguously in the name of "humanity" or "God" or "democracy". It is the uncritical acceptance of such categories as these (Jew, Nigger, American, Bolshevik—are others) that allows men, always liable to act in accordance with stock responses, to be herded into armies keyed up to destroy the "enemy".

Here man is at the mercy of words. And it is precisely here that the writer has a vital social function to perform. If he is not alive to the snares of language he is a more dangerous fool than his audience.

We know that it is attitudes which are important. It is attitudes that are effective.

In what way can a literary magazine most effectively combat the tendency in the human being to form rigid and uncompromising attitudes? For if it does not combat that tendency it merely panders to those forces which will explode the world for a third time. Obviously, as was suggested in MERLIN Number Two, it must proceed by hitting at fixed categories, by persuading men to analyse their own attitudes, to suspend their responses, to think critically, and then, in the historical context, *to act*.

It is for this reason that our new section "Chronicles" has come into being and that we shall in future, by arrangement with "Les Temps Modernes", reprint in translation those articles from that magazine which we believe to be most vital.

EXTRACT FROM WATT

Watt had little to say on the subject of the second or closing period of his stay in Mr Knott's house.

In the course of the second or closing period of Watt's stay in Mr Knott's house, the information acquired by Watt, on that subject, was scant.

Of the nature of Mr Knott himself Watt remained in particular ignorance.

Of the many excellent reasons for this, two seemed to Watt to merit mention: on the one hand the exiguity of the material propounded to his senses, on the other the decay of these. What little there was to see, to hear, to smell, to taste, to touch, like a man in a stupor he saw it, heard it, smelt it, tasted it, touched it.

In empty hush, in airless gloom, Mr Knott abode, in the large room set aside for his exclusive enjoyment, and that of his attendant. And from it this ambience followed him forth, and when he moved, in the house, in the garden, with him moved, dimming all, dulling all, stilling all, numbing all, where he passed.

The clothes that Mr Knott wore, in his room, about the house, amid his garden, were very various, very, very various. Now heavy, now light; now smart, now dowdy; now sober, now showy; now decent, now daring (his skirtless bathing-costume). Often too he wore, as he mooched about the rooms, the stairs, the passage-ways, of his home, a hat, or cap, or, imprisoning his rare his wanton hair, a net. And as often his head was bare.

As for his feet, sometimes he wore on each a sock, or on the one a sock and on the other a stocking, or a boot, or a shoe, or a slipper, or a sock and boot, or a sock and shoe, or a sock and slipper, or a stocking and boot, or a stocking and shoe, or a stocking and slipper, or nothing at all. And sometimes he wore on each a stocking, or on the one a stocking and on the other a boot, or a shoe, or a slipper, or a sock and boot, or a sock and shoe, or a sock and slipper, or a stocking and boot, or a stocking and shoe, or a stocking and slipper, or nothing at all. And sometimes he wore on each a boot, or on the one a boot and on the other a shoe, or a slipper, or a sock and boot, or a sock and shoe, or a sock and slipper, or a stocking and boot, or a stocking and shoe, or a stocking and slipper, or nothing at all. And sometimes he wore on each a shoe, or on the one a shoe and on the other a slipper, or a sock and boot, or a sock and shoe, or a sock and slipper, or a stocking and boot, or a stocking and shoe, or a stocking and slipper, or nothing at all. And sometimes he wore on each a slipper, or on the one a slipper and on the other a sock and boot, or a sock and shoe, or a sock and slipper, or a stocking and boot, or a stocking and shoe, or a stocking and slipper, or nothing at all. And sometimes he wore on each a sock and boot, or on the one a sock and boot and on the other a sock and shoe, or a sock and slipper, or a stocking and boot, or a stocking and shoe, or a stocking and slipper, or nothing at all. And sometimes he wore on each a sock and shoe, or on the one a sock and shoe and on the other a sock and slipper, or a stocking and boot, or a stocking and shoe, or a stocking and slipper, or nothing at all. And sometimes he wore on each a sock and slipper, or on the one a sock and slipper and on the other a stocking and boot, or a stocking and shoe, or a stocking and slipper, or nothing at all. And sometimes he wore on each a stocking and boot, or on the one a stocking and boot and on the other a stocking and shoe, or a stocking and slipper, or nothing at all. And sometimes he wore on each a stocking and shoe, or on the one a stocking and shoe and on the other a stocking and slipper, or nothing at all. And sometimes he wore on each a stocking and slipper, or on the one a stocking and slipper and on the other nothing at all. And sometimes he went barefoot.

To think, when one is no longer young, when one is not yet old, that one is no longer young, that one is not yet old, that is perhaps something. To pause, towards the close of one's three hour day, and consider: the darkening ease, the brightening trouble; the pleasure pleasure because it was, the pain pain because it shall be; the glad acts grown proud, the proud acts growing stubborn; the panting the trembling towards a being gone, a being to come; and the true true no longer, and the false true not yet. And to decide not to smile after all, sitting in the shade, hearing the cicadas, wishing it were night, wishing it were morning, saying, No, it is not the heart, no, it is not the liver, no, it is not the prostate, no, it is not the ovaries, no, it is muscular, it is nervous. Then the gnashing ends, or it goes on, and one is in the pit, in the hollow, the longing for longing gone, the horror of horror, and one is in the hollow, at the foot of all the hills at last, the ways down, the ways up, and free, free at last, for an instant free at last, nothing at last.

But whatever he put on, in the beginning, for by midnight he was always in his nightshirt, whatever he put on then, on his head, on his body, on his feet, he did not touch again, but kept on all that day, in his room, in his house, in his grounds, until the time came to put on his nightshirt, once again. Yes, not one button would he touch, to button or unbutton it, except those that nature obliged him to, and these he habitually left unbuttoned, from the moment of his putting on his clothes, and adjusting them to his satisfaction, to the moment of his taking them off, once more. So that he was not seldom to be seen, in his room, in his house, in his grounds, in strange and unseasonable garb, as though he were unaware of the weather, or of the time of year. And to see him sometimes thus, barefoot and for boating dressed, in the snow, in the slush, in the icy winter wind, or, when summer came again, by his fire, charged with furs, was to wonder, Does he seek to know again, what is cold, what is heat? But this was an anthropomorphic insolence of short duration.

For except, one, not to need, and, two, a witness to his not needing, Knott needed nothing, as far as Watt could see.

If he ate, and he ate well; if he drank, and he drank heartily; if he slept, and he slept sound; if he did other things, and he did other things regularly; it was not from need of food, or drink, or sleep, or other things, no, but from the need never to need, never, never to need, food, and drink, and sleep, and other things.

This was Watt's first surmise of any interest on the subject of Mr Knott.

And Mr Knott, needing nothing if not, one, not to need, and, two, a witness to his not needing, of himself knew nothing. And so he needed to be witnessed. Not that he might know, no, but that he might not cease.

This, on the subject of Mr Knott, was Watt's second, and closing, conjecture not entirely gratuitous.

Halting, faint with dubiety, from Watt's lips they fell.

His habitual tone was one of assurance.

But what kind of witness was Watt, weak now of eye, hard of hearing, and with even the more intimate senses greatly below par?

A needy witness, an imperfect witness.

The better to witness, the worse to witness.

That with his need he might witness its absence.

That imperfect he might witness it ill.

That Mr Knott might never cease, but ever almost cease.

Such appeared to be the arrangement.

When Mr Knott moved about the house he did so as one unfamiliar with the premises, fumbling at doors immemorially locked, kneeling rapt on window-seats, stumbling in the dark, seeking high and low the water-closet, pausing irresolute at the foot of the stairs, pausing irresolute at the head of the stairs.

When Mr Knott moved in the midst of his garden he did so as one unfamiliar with its beauties, looking at the trees, looking at the flowers, looking at the bushes, looking at the vegetables, as though they, or he, had been created in the course of the night.

But it was in his room, though he sometimes offered to leave it by the hanging-cupboard, that Mr Knott seemed least a stranger, and appeared to best advantage.

Here he stood. Here he sat. Here he knelt. Here he lay. Here he moved, to and fro, from the door to the window, from the window to the door; from the window to the door, from the door to the window; from the fire to the bed, from the bed to the fire; from the bed to the fire, from the fire to the bed; from the door to the fire, from the fire to the door; from the fire to the door, from the door to the fire; from the window to the bed, from the bed to the window; from the bed to the window, from the window to the bed; from the fire to the window, from the window to the fire; from the window to the fire, from the fire to the window; from the bed to the door, from the door to the bed; from the door to the bed, from the bed to the door; from the door to the window, from the window to the fire; from the fire to the window, from the window to the door; from the window to the door, from the door to the bed; from the bed to the door, from the door to the window; from the fire to the bed, from the bed to the window; from the window to the bed, from the bed to the fire; from the bed to the fire, from the fire to the door; from the door to the fire, from the fire to the bed; from the door to the window, from the window to the bed; from the bed to the window, from the window to the door; from the window to the door, from the door to the fire; from the fire to the door, from the door to the window; from the fire to the bed, from the bed to the door; from the door to the bed, from the bed to the fire; from the bed to the fire, from the fire to the window; from the window to the fire, from the fire to the bed; from the door to the fire, from the fire to the window; from the window to the fire, from the fire to the door; from the window to the bed, from the bed to the door; from the door to the bed, from the bed to the window; from the fire to the window, from the window to the bed; from the bed to the window, from the window to the fire; from the bed to the door, from the door to the fire; from the fire to the door, from the door to the bed.

This room was furnished solidly and with taste.

This solid and tasteful furniture was sujected by Mr Knott to frequent changes of position, both absolute and relative. Thus it was not rare to find, on the Sunday, the tallboy on its feet by the fire, and the dressing-table on its head by the bed, and the night-stool on its face by the door, and the washhand-stand on its back by the window; and, on the Monday, the tallboy on its head by the bed, and the dressing-table on its face by the door, and the night-stool on its back by the window, and the washhand-stand on its feet by the fire; and, on the Tuesday, the tallboy on its face by the door, and the dressing-table on its back by the window, and the night-stool on its feet by the fire, and the washhand-stand on its head by the bed; and, on the Wednesday, the tallboy on its back by the window, and the dressing-table on its feet by the fire, and the night-stool on its head by the bed, and the washhand-stand on its face by the door; and, on the Thursday, the tallboy on its side by the fire, and the dressing-table on its feet by the bed, and the night-stool on its head by the door, and the washhand-stand on its face by the window; and, on the Friday, the tallboy on its feet by the bed, and the dressing-table on its head by the door, and the night-stool on its face by the window, and the washhand-stand on its side by the fire; and, on the Saturday, the tallboy on its head by the door, and the dressing-table on its face by the window, and the night-stool on its side by the fire, and the washhand-stand on its feet by the bed; and, on the Sunday week, the tallboy on its face by the window, and the dressing-table on its side by the fire, and the night-stool on its feet by the bed, and the washhand-stand on its head by the door; and, on the Monday week, the tallboy on its back by the fire, and the dressing-table on its side by the bed, and the night-stool on its feet by the door, and the washhand-stand on its head by the window; and, on the Tuesday week, the tallboy on its side by the bed, and the dressing-table on its feet by the door, and the night-stool on its head by the window, and the washhand-stand on its back by the fire; and, on the Wednesday week, the tallboy on its feet by the door, and the dressing-table on its head by the window, and the night-stool on its back by the fire, and the washhand-stand on its side by the bed; and, on the Thursday week, the tallboy on its head by the window, and the dressing-table on its back by the fire, and the night-stool on its side by the bed, and the washhand-stand on its feet by the door; and, on the Friday week, the tallboy on its face by the fire, and the dressing-table on its back by the bed, and the night-stool on its side by the door, and the washhand-stand on its feet by the window; and, on the Saturday week, the tallboy on its back by the bed, and the dressing-table on its side by the door, and the night-stool on its feet by the window, and the washhand-stand on its face by the fire; and, on the Sunday fortnight, the tallboy on its side by the door, and the dressing-table on its feet by the window, and the night-stool on its face by the fire, and the washhand-stand on its back by the bed; and, on the Monday fortnight, the tallboy on its feet by the window, and the dressing-table on its face by the fire, and the night-stool on its back by the bed, and the washhand-stand on its side by the door; and, on the Tuesday fortnight, the tallboy on its head by the fire, and the dressing-table on its face by the bed, and the night-stool on its back by the door, and the washhand-stand on its side by the window; and, on the Wednesday fortnight, the tallboy on its face by the bed, and the dressing-table on its back by the door, and the night-stool on its side by the window, and the washhand-stand on its head by the fire; and, on the Thursday fortnight, the tallboy on its back by the door, and the dressing-table on its side by the window, and the night-stool on its head by the fire, and the washhand-stand on its face by the bed; and, on the Friday fortnight, the tallboy on its side by the window, and the dressing-table on its head by the fire, and the night-stool on its face by the bed, and the washhand-stand on its back by the door, for example, not at all rare, to consider only, over a period of nineteen days only, the tallboy, the dressing-table, the night-stool and the washhand-stand, and their feet, and heads, and faces, and backs, and unspecified sides, and the fire, and the bed, and the door, and the window, not by any means rare.

For the chairs also, to mention only the chairs also, were never still.

For the corners also, the mention only the corners also, were seldom vacant.

Alone the bed maintained the illusion of fixity, the bed so tasteful, the bed so solid, that it was round, and clamped to the ground.

Mr Knott's head, Mr Knott's feet, in nightly displacements of almost one minute, completed in twelve months their circuit of this solitary couch. His coccyx also, and adjacent gear, performed their little annual revolution, as appeared from an examination of the sheets (changed regularly, on Saint Patrick's Day), and even of the mattress.

Of the strange doings above stairs, that had so preoccupied Watt during his time below stairs, no explanation was to be had. But they did not preoccupy Watt any longer.

From time to time Mr Knott disappeared from his room, leaving Watt alone. Mr Knott was there one moment, and the next gone. But on these occasions Watt, unlike Erskine, did not feel impelled to institute a search, above stairs and below, assassinating with his tread the quiet house, and pestering his colleague in the kitchen, no, but he remained quietly where he was, not wholly asleep, not wholly awake, until Mr Knott came back.

Watt suffered neither from the presence of Mr Watt, nor from his absence. When he was with him, he was content to be with him, and when he was away from him, he was content to be away from him. Never with relief, never with regret, did he leave him at night, or in the morning come to him again.

This ataraxy covered the entire house-room, the pleasure-garden, the vegetable-garden, and of course Arthur.

So that when the time came for Watt to depart, he walked to the gate with the utmost serenity.

But he was no sooner in the public road than he burst into tears. He stood there, he remembered, with bowed head, and a bag in each hand, and his tears fell, a slow minute rain, to the ground, which had recently been repaired. He would not have believed such a thing possible, if he had not been there himself, and seen it with his own eyes. The humidity thus lent to the ground surface must, he reckoned, have survived his departure by as long as two minutes at least, if not three. Fortunately the weather was fine.

Watt's room contained no information. It was a small, dingy, and, though Watt was a man of some bodily cleanliness, fetid compartment. Its one window commanded a very fine view of a race-course. The painting, or coloured reproduction, yielded nothing further. On the contrary, as time passed, its significance diminished.

From Mr Watt's voice nothing was to be learnt. Between Mr Knott and Watt no conversation passed. From time to time, for no apparent reason, Mr Knott opened his mouth in song. From bass to tenor, all male registers were employed by him, with equal success. He did not sing well, in Watt's opinion, but Watt had heard worse singers. The music of these songs was of an extreme monotony. For the voice, save for an occasional raucous sally, both up and down, to the extent of a tenth, or even an eleventh, did not leave the pitch at which, having elected to begin, it seemed obliged to remain, and finally to end. The words of these songs were either without meaning, or derived from an idiom with which Watt, a very fair linguist, had no acquaintance. The open a sound was predominant, and the explosives k and g. Mr Knott often talked to himself too, with great variety and vehemence of intonation and gesticulation, but this so softly that it came, a wild dim chatter, meaningless to Watt's ailing ears. This was a noise of which Watt grew exceedingly fond. Not that he was sorry when it ceased, not that he was happy when it came again, no. But while it sounded he was gladdened, as by the rain on the bamboos, or even rushes, as by the land against the waves, doomed to cease, doomed to come again. Knott was also addicted to solitary dactylic ejaculations of extraordinary vigour, accompanied by spasms of the members. The chief of these were: Exelmans! Cavendish! Habbakuk! Ecchymose!

With regard to the so important matter of Mr Knott's physical appearance, Watt had unhappily little or nothing to say. For one day Mr Knott would be tall, fat, pale and dark, and the next thin, small, flushed and fair, and the next sturdy, middlesized, yellow and ginger, and the next small, fat, pale and fair, and the next middlesized, flushed, thin and ginger, and the next tall, yellow, dark and sturdy, and the next fat, middlesized, ginger and pale, and the next tall, thin, dark and flushed, and the next small, fair, sturdy and yellow, and the next tall, ginger, pale and fat, and the next thin, flushed, small and dark, and the next fair, sturdy, middlesized and yellow, and the next dark, small, fat and pale, and the next fair, middlesized, flushed and thin, and the next sturdy, ginger, tall and yellow, and the next pale, fat, middlesized and fair, and the next flushed, tall, thin and ginger, and the next yellow, small, dark and sturdy, and the next fat, flushed, ginger and tall, and the next dark, thin, yellow and small, and the next fair, pale, sturdy and middlesized, and the next dark, flushed, small and fat, and the next thin, fair, yellow and middlesized, and the next pale, sturdy, ginger and tall, and the next flushed, fair, fat and middlesized, and the next yellow, ginger, tall and thin, and the next sturdy, small, pale and dark, and the next tall, fat, yellow and fair, and the next small, pale, thin and ginger, and the next middlesized, flushed, dark and sturdy, and the next fat, small, ginger and yellow, and the next middlesized, thin, dark and pale, and the next tall, fair, sturdy and flushed, and the next middlesized, dark, yellow and fat, and the next thin, pale, tall and fair, and the next ginger, sturdy, small and flushed, and the next dark, tall, fat and yellow, and the next fair, small, pale and thin, and the next sturdy, ginger, middlesized and flushed, and the next yellow, fat, small and fair, and the next pale, middlesized, thin and ginger, and the next flushed, tall, dark and sturdy, and the next fat, yellow, ginger and middlesized, and the next dark, thin, pale and tall, and the next fair, flushed, sturdy and small, and the next ginger, yellow, tall and fat, and the next thin, dark, pale and small, and the next flushed, sturdy, fair and middlesized, and the next yellow, dark, fat and small, and the next pale, fair, middlesized and thin, and the next sturdy, tall, flushed and ginger, and the next middlesized, fat, yellow and fair, and the next tall, pale, thin and ginger, and the next small, flushed, dark and sturdy, and the next fat, tall, fair and pale, and the next small, thin, ginger and flushed, and the next middlesized, dark, sturdy and yellow, and the next small, ginger, pale and fat, and the next thin, flushed, middlesized and dark. and the next fair, sturdy, tall and yellow, and the next dark, middlesized, fat and pale, and the next fair, tall, flushed and thin, and the next sturdy, ginger, small and yellow, and the next flushed, fat, tall and fair, and the next yellow, small, thin and ginger, and the next pale, middlesized, dark and sturdy, and the next fat, flushed, ginger and small, and the next dark, thin, yellow and middlesized, and the next fair, pale, sturdy and tall, and the next dark, flushed, middlesized and fat, and the next thin, fair, yellow and tall, and the next pale, sturdy, ginger and small, and the next flushed, fat, dark and tall, and the next yellow, fair, small and thin, and the next sturdy, middlesized, pale and ginger, and the next small, fat, flushed and fair, and the next middlesized, yellow, thin and ginger, and the next tall, pale, dark and sturdy, and the next fat, middlesized, ginger and flushed, and the next tall, thin, dark and yellow, and the next small, fair, sturdy and pale, or so it seemed to Watt, to mention only the figure, stature, skin and hair.

For daily changed, as well as these, in carriage, expression, shape and size, the feet, the legs, the hands, the arms, the nose. the mouth, the eyes, the ears, to mention only the feet, the legs, the hands, the arms, the nose, the mouth, the eyes, the ears, and their carriage, expression, shape and size.

For the port, the voice, the smell, the coiffure, were seldom the same, from day to day, to mention only the port, the voice, the smell, the coiffure.

For the way of hawking, the way of spitting, were subject to daily fluctuation, to consider only the way of hawking, the way of spitting.

For the belch was never the same, two days running, to go no further than the belch.

In these transformations Watt had no hand or part, and did not know at what hour of the twenty-four they were carried out. He suspected however that they were carried out between the hours of midnight, when Watt ended his day by helping Mr Knott into his nightdress, and then into his bed, and of eight in the morning, when Watt began his day by helping Mr Knott out of his bed, and then out of his nightdress. For if Mr Knott had modified his appearance during Watt's hours of attendance, then it is unlikely that he could have done so without attracting Watt's attention, if not at the time, at least in the hours following. So Watt suspected that it was in the depths of the night, when the risk of disturbance was small, that Mr Knott organized his exterior, for the day to come. And what went far to strengthen this supicion in the heart of Watt was this, that when sometimes, in the depths of the night, unable or unwilling to sleep he rose and went to the window, to look at the stars, which he had once known familiarly by name, when dying in London, and breathe the night air, and listen to the night sounds, of which he was still extremely curious, he sometimes saw, between him and the ground, lightening the darkness, greyening the leaves and, in wet weather, tinseling the rain, a fascia of white light.

If these repeated investments, and divestments, of the nightdress, did not finally reveal to Watt Mr Knott's veritable aspect, the reason for that was perhaps this, that Mr Knott's attitude to his nightdress, and to his daydress, was not that generally adopted. For he did not do as most men, and many women, do, who, before putting on their nightclothes, at night, pull off their soiled dayclothes, and again, when morning comes, once again, before they dream of putting on their dayclothes are careful to pull off their soiled nightclothes, no, but he went to bed with his nightclothes over his dayclothes, and he rose with his dayclothes under his nightclothes.

None of Mr Knott's gestures could be called characteristic, unless perhaps that which consisted in the simultaneous obturation of the facial cavities, the thumbs in the mouth, the forefingers in the ears, the little fingers in the nostrils, the third fingers in the eyes and the second fingers, free in a crisis to promote intellection, laid along the temples.

Other traits, other little ways, little ways of passing the little days, Watt remarked in Mr Knott, and could have told if he had wished, if he had not been tired, so very tired, by all he had told already, tired of adding, tired of subtracting, tired of multiplying, tired of dividing, to and from, from and by, by and to, the same old things the same old things.

But he could not bear that we should part, never to meet again (in this world), never, never to meet again, and I in ignorance of how Mr Knott put on his boots, or his shoes, or his slippers, or his boot and shoe, or his boot and slipper, or his shoe and slipper, when he did so, when he did not merely put on a boot, or a shoe, or a slipper. So, taking his hands from my shoulders, he told how Mr Knott, when he felt the time come, taking on a cunning air would begin to sidle sidle up to the boots, or up to the boot and shoe, or up to the boot and slipper, or up to the shoe and slipper, sidle sidle little by little with an artless air little by little nearer and nearer to where they lay, in the rack, till he was near enough, pouncing, to secure them. And then, while he put on the one, the black boot, the brown shoe, the black slipper, the brown boot, the black shoe, the brown slipper, on the one foot, he held the other tight, lest it should escape, or put it in his pocket, or put it in his mouth, or put his foot upon it, or put it in a drawer, till he might put it on, on the other foot.

— Samuel Beckett

ELEGY XXXVIII

November 19, 1952, in a letter from my father
,that on the southern reaches of this island
three vessels founder'd, three liviers, three store-
places shelved to the waters,
more chaos,   on this face of Gaea
than the tidal sweep of 1929, he said—or

Nothing (& from this prolapse of wharf & store-place)
,nothing much to show for't
in the gaunt and grey grisaille of sky, saw storm, shipp'd
to a crazy niké,   cant slow to down-   water-niké, then

nailed to Her prow; one breastpoint like dolphin-sticker
down-   to a sacrificial lamb-blown-furrow up-

,Tide-Chaser, sing to me

His forehead grey with moly; that He should ship-out
,on a Tarshish craft !

Nevertheless, having reached high-top of some delight
,and having played among the dottles on the cabin floor
having had an eponym for grandsire,

my Mother, Jonah-bearer, Miriam, builder of cities, marsh-
drainer, breast-giver, Niké,   beloved cruse-carrier !

I knew the times of the glacier, I carried the stones
onto the pastures, saw the pylon struck upon Vimy
,that parts of my dead are there, hear a Georgic
written and sung, song out of wasp out of dead ass-belly,

cry from the naze at the southern-cape, bronze
floats on the tide,

and the wheat grows hot, sweet burns the coriander & oat,

I hear the german tambour,   I am not born, I
heel shorewards on the metal drift of the tide,
that I am late of the belly of Fortuna
,am from this lineage, naméd Calder

again, then sung upon this water-mother
Emma Calder
fey, even at my birth
crux like a christ-queen to the main-truck,
discovert at the time of Her birth,   Calder her man
dead   barret on'is head, spent-
coins on his fillets and his hands,   apeptic
to the Host, ascend him

preempt these waters ✠ sustenance on these waters,

In my urgent days I suffered a predilection for virgins
my parts proximal to Polaris
keeping strict watch and dog-tempo
from my window, seeing Thetis
sail reconditioned to Nain,
shaveling I was, blessed, profane in the
sight of my Father,

dead, done by the holy Pox, Phelan, true popist
friend of my childhood
taught me into women's ways,

die quodam natus sum
aliquo moriar,

I have had some intercourse with a devil
let fall her white shift to the ground
then, having had her in anger
picked daily at keelson
with many cirripeds coming off in my fingers
,to the hairs of the Rood
,delighting my senses
et incarnatus est
at the moment of my wakening
and a wet horror fresh at my loins, Calder,
my name, mine aspect
my fetters
are cast in strange ways and in countenances,

I am a blooded Cain
I have a wife in Albany
crucified to a lathe, making aircraft parts
I would wish her dead
as She wishes the warmth of my pallet,

I have infected a sweet daughter of the Incoronata
inviting the lyms of the State
    to inspect my apartments—
I lived then in a quaint place, richly appointed
    and surrounded by flowering cypresses,

,finding these right-handed limbs and parts of me
stiff and not supple, not
being ambidextrous I die, my organs
in odour, my nerves and useful lineaments
in atrophy, my brain-husk is in anger,
only my bladder can function, I walk
at times unaided to the not-mentioned places
and gaze at what is left whole of me, mother
Calder, as
the warmth of you has enchanted me
now comes a heat from your forficate thighs
        ,making a broider of want on my senses,
        let me make confession before you,
that I would have you say of me
                    that I, with my genus
am corrupt above all others,

I am of a mixture
that is a kind, called by a right name,

I have eaten of brose, of
curdled and unleaven'd humble stuff
        and this has fatten'd me

I have made a lusty eat of the manna of sacraments,
this powder has quenched me
and quieted my loins,

(Thyrsis, look to your flock ✠)

I have conned the writings by the holy taper,
assisted my blood to the sacrificial urn

and taken my water to the sacred places,
yet   ,saw beast and angel in those clear depths
where a helot lay drown'd,   spent
lies the altar-flower !   Calder, I
have made fest at your wake,   three
chain-links at my ankle, three luster'd-handles
crowding the waist of my shrouded hearse,

* * *

this shewbread, this from my Father's kitchens,

* * *

ego plus quam feci facere non possum

and the beast warm under my hand
and the heats of his movements; I have lain
down with the warmth of goats,
have turned the fashions of egrets from my seed,
that my seed might have been free-flowing,

ELEGY XXXIX

First priest : I am the Resurrection and the Life—
Second priest : *I* am the Resurrection and the Life !
(from an Essay by Bertrand Russell)

ALKAIOS, I will still sing of you, I
will make use of all your devices, I
die, with a maddened
venom in me, they

WHO have made mock of me, giving me let
to visit the place of your sepulchre,
to lay the Rose on't
that I now wear the habit of the worker in metals
the blue shift of the syndicat, I am
it is said that I am of the aluminium-age, of the
times, of the silver eagle, the grenade-caster
,of the orpiment of peace-making   thrown
careless to the whitening cities,

(Thyrsis look to your flock)

Goat ! builder of cities

☆

I can make no obeisance
for the mad trumpeting from the kine of the air
from the conceits of the wind-makers
for the stone-throwers (am elect. I
have the antidote, jewelled in my bright vein),
He has pressed His bright iron to me
that christ again come at me
stood gentle in the prow of his Holy carack
shone through a furze of incense,

I am inept in logic, theology
I am an incomer to this cult,   was incontinent !

☆

A petrel sings white on the high-top, there
showing her parts to me
as I lie in the black sand,

(misericordia) they have petitioned us,

I have made quietus with the pit-workers
have studied the tablets
made addenda, changes, erasures, here, there
suggested fresh syntax, for the clay, the entablature,

foot to the holy oil
knee to the ointment
thigh to the crux
navel to Delphi
breast to the whip
head to the Host,

and that that is of no significance
,is the dreadful liturgy / of invention,

what then, Thyrsis,   of these flocks ?
,keep watch on your pasture, see to the hills,
put the fangéd belt to thy wife,

☆

Wind-maker,
look to the macle seen dark in your crystal
see two loves at odds with their advocate,
these are the maculae in the dark horn
      ,the sweated corn of intemperance,

brown-ore, orpiment-lustre, pyrites, marcasite
soft gold in marl of the floor of the loam
of the sand of Her caverns, ceiléd
with cannel, bright
voices sung from argus from wind-top, roots to
the whole of me sapor of me, I am
crux
to the main-truck,   sat in cavea with
a pythia telling hexameters,
dull with the wine of my own knowledge
sate with the poppies of moderation,

(these Gods are words) I have known
the laughter of gods from the books
set down in a fancy engravure, I have done
with intolerably technical things
            ,midwife, Eileithuia
you have seen the arithmetic of my coming
and the chemistry of my death writ large on the tambour

                        élan vital is the marque of a boîte
in the quartier
(I have had some religious experience, told me in
brothels, some nard

has been spread on my temples
some wine has been spilt from the grail,
I have tasted the ichors of virtue,
                              conforming to nature)

☆

terra nova (out of the sunspot)...

’αδιαφορα,

—Henry Charles Hatcher

HE AND SHE

Along the street condescending to grace
She strode to cleave the thick air
That dividing left a place
For her rectiline face
And sharp incomparable figure.
Next year it was as if she
Had never been (green
Eyes veiled) and he felt free
No, bound to go back again.

The precise relation in space and time
Of him to her is asking
Much of a chronicler, rhyme
Not now being edged to sting
As a ground bass or an enzyme
Even, changing but remaining
Unchanged. Where is the key
That will fit his body
And hers and unlock the paradigm ?

We die and are born.
What we were yesterday has flowed
Into time, the cells torn
And renewed. Too well she showed
How desire had rent her mind;
He had been purblind—
Saw only his trivial hell
Not worth the harrowing, subtle
Disprizer of his self-twisted thorn.

He would like to have spoken
As a glib tongue can do
That exiguous token
Of the altogether true.
But the words cracked
Could not maintain
Their surface strain
And broken could only refract
The truth and turn it skew.

She could accept the minute,
Extracting its gold and
Holding it nakedly taut,
While he added query to ampersand
And let passion dilute
Into a frippery diagnosis
Of the psyche and sin,
Quite out of tune with Eros
Or the flow of adrenalin.

Dreaming in lonely bed
Each shook with desire
She to be flesh and bone
With love's seed
He to be the loved one.
A phœnix, she can fire
Her seminal nest
And on her solar pyre
Reborn can rest.

Apple ripe on the bough
He cannot resist.
She let it be. Eve can desist
When Adam's pride must crow.
Tree of too much knowledge
Help him to bear
The weight of what he cannot share,
Set not his teeth on edge
And give him harbour.

Her salad days had taught her
What Heraclitus meant by flux
And the mingling of hell and heaven.
She rounded her Cythère
Discovering fresh water
A new-fledged sun and the paradox
That fire lives the death of air,
Able to accept as given
All that can enliven.

His soul was blank without her
Generous fulfilment
And could not stir
To capture its own content.
The year was as if it had never been

And he was back again
In a street he could not circumvent
Built of uncertainties
And heavy eyes.

Linnet green in the glare
Plume, poise and softly take your mate
(Lilac quivering as the note
Lingers) then flare
Into your triumphant trill.
Ended. The street is still.
Gone she has left a vacuum,
But the echoing air
Slowly presses into the scented toom.

—Ronald Bottrall

LETTER II: *On This Water Burningly.*

On this water burningly
Trusted on the language
I am to walk to you
Through night and through
Each word you make between
Each word I burn bright in
On this wide reach. You,
Within what arms you lie,
Light me my burning ways
Across those darknesses
That move and merge like foam.
Lie in the world's room,
My dear, and contribute
Here where all dialogues write.

Younger in the towered
Tenements of night he heard
The shipyards with nightshifts
Of lathes turning their shafts.

His voice was a humble ear
Hardly turned to her.
And the mantle-brasslight there
Shone busily in the fire
Lightning of the kitchen.

Night moves. I am driven in
This word-engraving pulse
To break me from that False
Hooded hero's sight.
Break me out of this night,
This silence where you are not,
Nor any within earshot.
Break break me from that sea
Helmet of idiocy.

Laugh then. It's joke enough
Though he sat there as deaf
And worn to a stop
As the word had given him up.
That night (This is his night
Writ large.) came to inherit
His death. And the bright breath
Of night's array shone forth
(Shines here on us down.)
On the nightshifting town.
On water he set out
With puny gear to write
Him to my better death
And to that great breath-
Taking of the sea,
The graith of Poetry.
This maintainer, this firth
Shall not grudge his death

Into myself at this last
Word you die in. This 'last'.

—W. S. Graham

HEDYPHAGETICA

[*Extract*]

"Eighteen years a riveter—odd, isn't it ? He was in the shop where the nacelles are fitted about the engines. It used to be done the other way, you know: they mounted the engines *into* the nacelles. Then the supply of strategic materials slackened and they had to devise a new system; well, it was all for the better; this one is much more flexible: the bottleneck has always been in airframe production, not engines. Excuse me, but I think it's queer." Puddick squeezed shut his eyes bedded in a dim, melancholy pressure of headache; his fingers massaged his temples. "Anyhow, the stamped aluminum sheets are brought in—by some kind of mechanism, I suppose—they're devilishly clever..." He squinted at the ceiling until there came to him, through grins and twinges of migraine, an image of aluminum sheets darting from the foyer in the direction of the salon, wiggling, like marionettes, beneath a conveyor belt; he glanced at Yvette, absorbed with her chemicals, her delicate little vials, eyedroppers, spatulas. "And meanwhile, the engines are on the test-blocks, turning at—what is it they turn at ? five hundred RPM, a thousand ? They have an electric device they clamp over the propellor shaft: it's what they call a tachometer, but it also has the properties of an ear—you've never seen anything like it in your life. The rhythm is recorded on a screen: a green line... pulsations, oscillations... same sort of gadget used on human brains—"

"What is that ?" Yvette demanded. She was reducing some green crystals in a small porcelain mortar.

"To determine whether the patient is insane."

"Who ?"

"I tell you, it's strange. It intrigues me." Despite the pain, it had been in a strong, self-assured tone that he had described how nacelles are fitted about engines in Plant Eleven, what the noise of the machines is like and what its effects; he had got a reputation for realism of attitude, for clear-seeing and toughmindedness, and there had been a certain virile grate—Yvette was fond of it—in his speech when he had come to the considerable risks run by workmen using electric riveting hammers in the neighborhood of aviation gasoline. But now, after he had watched her roll her poison into pills, he dropped his eyes to the papers on his lap; perhaps, he thought, it was less whimsical than it had at first seemed. He went on in a whisper: "Dr. Samuel Johnson—I'm merely reading the report—, Dr. Samuel Johnson has completed eighteen years of penal servitude. He has been working as a riveter in Plant Eleven, Engine Installation, and will be released today, at six o'clock, according to custom."

"Puddy !" cried Yvette. "Really ! That's a howl." She began to chew one of her tablets.

"It's killing," Puddick gravely assented; "but it's true. I have this morning's report here; they have a great deal to say about the man. It's odd. Eighteen years. I was a mere boy then."

His sensitive mouth trembled as if he were taken by a chill; he lifted his weak, beaten, intelligent eyes; greatly unquiet, he meditated this difficult Yvette who had raised him up from dust to celebrity as his country's most influential author.

"Oh, yes," said he sadly, decrying what he flattered himself was his fate depending tremulously from the rice-plaster ceiling, where rose-colored damosels jibed their lace-wristed young seigneurs; "the murderer."

"Wait !" This was the dramatic woman, the dramatic career. Her eyes were wide open. "There was a special sort of Johnson—magic, or something like that ? Wealthy, excellent family, lived with a lot of insects—"

"Stuffed birds," Puddick said wearily. "You were a girl then, I was a..." and his thoughts strayed and slipped, became separated one from the other, lost, as in a wilderness. He beheld himself as a mere boy; a little boy lost, a very small, very vile little fellow, lost, unlistened to; he was on the verge of tears, exhausted in that emptiness. He had had the sensation, he had observed the scene before; he folded his hands.

Yvette's were nervous. She broke the second tablet in two. "Stuffed birds. Coming out of prison, you say ? or going in ? Oh, you're right; this *is* killing. " He imagined she too was addressing her most precious attention to the past through which, surely, there wobbled stripes of chromium, gusts of bubbling water, flaky whipped cream and the exact amount of ennui; he saw it, he saw it with adequate clarity: dynamism, and so on, drama. A wave of gaiety swept across her exquisite features. The sound was that of a liquid rising briskly through a straw: "*Chéri*," she murmured with the sudden, startling tenderness that never failed to penetrate to his very bowels, "you're always full of bloody tales and horrors and telling me all kinds of disgusting claptrap—"

"Coming out," Puddick insisted stolidly, glumly. "I don't believe it was planned to happen this way."

"Probably all a bad dream. Eighteen years ! Well, we'll have him popped right back in again, won't we ? Then we'll wake up," she concluded brightly. There were choking noises from an adjoining chamber.

"Claude-Maxime wonders whether it will do an ounce of good."

"Does he ?"she snapped. "What does he care about doing an ounce of good ? Do you think it ever does any good, or any harm, or any anything ?"

"That's funny too. Claude-Maxime asked me those very questions today."

Her eyes—they had a tendency to bulge when she was moved—shone; her voice was brittle again; she swept her chemicals aside. "And what did you say, little one ?" His reply was barely audible. He was convinced she would be canonized someday. "You said you didn't know ? You should know, you two; and if you don't, my little Puddy dear, you shouldn't let people know you don't know."

Puddick flapped his hands. "It could be another Dr. Samuel Johnson, after all," he suggested. "Who knows ?"

"I know. You know too—you know damned well it's not. What if it were ? They're all the same. It's always been the same thing, the same man, the same problem—" The Accuser's oaths traversed the thin partitions.

"And," Puddick interrupted, inspired by the dull courage that comes of despair, "it's never solved and I don't think it ever will be. Do you want me to have him put to death ? No, you don't, and you're right. They must be punished, that's the first thing. To punish them, they have got to be alive, that's the second thing. And the third thing is, punished for what ? If it's something they have done, it's all useless; if it is for something they have not done, or for nothing, then one creates something, and every time it turns out to be something unpunishable... invisible... I don't know what to call it, and we've given up trying to find a name for it. Does that affect anything, you want to know? No, surely not; we punish all the same. But why ? For what purpose ? I'm not asking for what reason—we haven't got one, we don't need one—, but what does it *get* us ? I think it gets us laughed at. No, don't worry, they're not laughing, and that's the queer thing; *we* are," he said solemnly, "*we're* laughing. It's very serious and very complicated. I haven't worked it out yet. My God," he said, "we're behind them all, I tell you. They're tricky—they don't look it, but they are. It all worked very nicely when we frightened them—do you remember ? But what can you do when they are afraid, got accustomed to being frightened, used to it, more or less bored by it..." Then he asked himself whether he was going to be ill.

And presently they had bellowing from another room.

"*Chéri.*"

She rose and went to calm the Chief of State and to dress for dinner.

Puddick was left to greet their guest, the man called Mekkech. There was a smiting of arms and heels at the palace gate below; a black figure was saluted in the smoky light of cressets, and the watchword shouted down vaulted cinderblock corridors whose marble sheathing had been five years on order. There, in a minute, stood a dark tense little man, made like a metal arrow, with bitter ironic eyes; they made a deep impression upon Puddick who later affirmed they belonged to one risen from the dead. Puddick did his polite best; said their Excellencies would join them shortly; would the visitor be seated. The agent was restless, his behaviour made the writer uncomfortable—but Puddick sought to undertsand. He knew nothing but that Mekkech merited no trust, had an obscure employment, was one of Yvette's favorites, and that he had been away for ages. "I dare say you're delighted to be back," Puddick proposed. Mekkech said nothing; he tramped up and down before the immense fireplace, scuffed the heavy crimson carpet, scowled when his toe drew a hollow ping from the massive andirons. He peered at the Louis XIV clock. It had stopped. He lifted, shook it, then muttered in disgust and restored the clock, ungently, to its place. At last, he moved to the tall window and for a long time stared morosely over the City to which a Christian government had brought the odor of sanctity.

Puddick blew his nose. Another catastrophe, the day perished, flinging itself into the sack of nothingness history, masked and flourishing a brace of cocked pistols, indicates for ambitious failures, suicides, poppinjays. The masters were in a funk, their creatures sulked, a cheat, a theft, an outrage were thridded in the year's new air. Having promised God much, and greatly puffed up, this City's very hours, its sunshine, its winds and distances were covered with confusion and even gripped with shame. Puddick was unspeakably embarassed. However, the purgative ceremonies began.

They were in the nature of an attack, a brilliantly coordinated, a devastating, a moving spectacle staged by the authorities, they who were the most far-sighted and the best-qualified. Flights, squadrons, wings and groups, whole air armadas and air fleets whistled hither and thither; scores, hundreds of airplanes of every description flew in every direction and at every altitude, according to a scheme the planners were in an unending rage to perfect; in formation and singly and in clouds they dipped, banked, rolled, spun, raced like blazing torches in the weekly show of force, now and again colliding in midair, some bursting against the sides of buildings, others upon the pavements. Even the most indifferent were roused by the performance, even souls of mud were thrilled. Rockets—harmless tracer shells—a few armed projectiles wove a web in the purpling sky of flesh, searchlights made it glisten, a fever was in heaven and earth. Phosphorous and magnesium flares hung swaying, dripping, like terror above the City, transforming it into a wet and incandescent grave, every one of whose parts leapt out in interesting combinations of greenish grey and furry shadow; the world splashed furiously through its own mirage; the echo of its own shout roared in its ears; storm outraged its details; objects were broken, spoiled, sliced clean through, cindered in a flash. A hail of steel fragments swept roofs and thoroughfares; the hail thickened to a deluge as ponderous transports and gaudily decorated bombers spilled objects of continually increasing bulk—tins of fuel and auxiliary wing tanks, then chunks of armored plate whistled, at last beams and strips of railroad track and a narrow-gauge locomotive thrashed through the air; certain among the younger pilots were permitted the extravagance of several hundredweight of incendiary compound.

"Wild, isn't it?" Puddick said during a lull.

Wilder still was the low-level drop of twenty thousand parachutists, a manœuver accomplished with exceptional precision and five per cent losses; in the confusion that ensued, the survivors, all impetuous, mettlesome lads, gave themselves over to committing many of those acts upon whose strategic value only the accounts of generals deserve attention. The observor saw no more, however, than the swift effortless subduing of a weak-willed opposition: among other things, this had a sharp flavor of mock warfare: the resistance put up by the irregular battalions—composed of housewives, disabled veterans, the unemployed, and eighteen thousand adolescent members of a youth organization pledged to cleanliness—excited only a proper measure of contempt. The City was secured in a trice; there were the usual incidents of playful give and take as the invaders avenged their comrades; the night watched replaced the day; the air force thundered off; and from within public shelters and countless damp little retreats came the shrill notes of the national anthem, notes rising bravely from the breasts of nearly a million progressive people.

To Puddick, the rite was as a refreshing draught, a potent aspirin; it quickened his tongue. "This," said he, "this..." with a broad gesture; "you'll find nothing like it in any other country. You can't imagine what it means to us, to them, or how much thought and money and preparation and sheer daring have gone into developing what you have just... seen. Those games spring straight from the nation's essence. They are a symbol—but this is not something which benefits from description. It occurs every week. Every week—hard to believe, isn't it ?" Lit by the glare of scattered fires, teams of bill-posters completed their work in the streets; all over the City the fires waned, and were one by one, unhurriedly, extinguished; an inconsiderable natural gas reservoir popped; and that was all. "Have you had an agreeable journey ?"

"I have an appointment for half-past nine," Mekkech said. "What's keeping them ?"

"Oh, my. Dinner will be served soon. I appreciate your eagerness to see their Excellencies. And they are no less anxious to see you. Are you enjoying your stay in the City ?"

Mekkech stood planted at the window. The by now faint singing gave way to faint moaning. Hands outstretched, groping and supplicating, a blessed however guileful population fumbled towards its bed to curl up, quivering, in a final goodnight sweat before yielding to sleep.

Silence, broad and deep, the echo and sleeve of the elusive symbol, lifted itself above the blackness, and that shroud enshrouded sat the vigil; an honorable peace, an impenetrable, anaesthetic calm were sovereign; from a bathroom came sounds of water hissing in pipes. "A tricky bunch," thought Puddick, and then he heard this certainly dangerous man breathing curses at the night.

"... so many beasts" came amidst the twitch and jerk of water; then Claude-Maxime, far away, his blotched noble face pushed against a shaving mirror, his little red eyes running with rage, began to gargle. "One feels like a fool, a fool," thought Puddick as he listened to the unfamiliar accent:

"Lop a chicken's head off, and the bird may live for hours, days, and—why not ?—for years, forever. Granted the proper care and circumstances, it may go on scratching dirt, stalking and strutting in the coop, laying a perfect stream of eggs, hatchings broods; loving, increasing, enquiring. Ridiculous to insist it has any greater need of a brain than of a soul... to be eaten—"

"But," Puddick shouted, gesticulating rapidly, "they need it, they want it. We have polled public opinion... polled it again and again... they can't do without it. It's theirs, that's what you fail to see, theirs, not ours, and to them it's precious—perhaps," said he, a raw pain in his throat, " there's been some mistake." He stood up; he sat down quickly, blushing.

Claude-Maxime, a shadow of his old self, entered the room supporting a decanter of brandy. The glorious old invalid promptly fell into a chair, set the cut-glass decanter on a lacquered coffee table, covered his face with his hands. "This evening," he prophecied in a blurred voice, "is not going to be a success."

"Your Excellency, our guest has arrived—"

"I saw him."

"He says he has had a comfortable and uneventful journey, and that the City exceeds all his expectations. As for this evening's air games, he finds them—"

"Staggering, aren't they ? Too bloody much for me. Well, you're here; I saw you."

There was a pause; turning now towards the agent, Puddick resumed:

"The Accuser is in capital health, but even constitutions as vigorous and youthful as his have their limits imposed by nature. It is a wise man who does not press himself too far, but observes moderation in all things." Then Puddick noted that man is the measure of all things and began to crack his knuckles; he frowned and continued: "His Excellency has had a trying day. Every day is apt to be a trying day. Few of us could hope to engage the problems, shoulder the responsibilities with which the Accuser has always to cope. Even we, whose burden is in comparison with his so negligible, even we are practically at our wits' ends, at the end of our rope, burning the candle at both ends in this manner. Nothing new," the writer hastened to say; "there is nothing new under the sun. Just more of what is substantially the same until one cannot distinguish past from future; everything seems old and banal, one feels oneself snared in a machine, turned into a machine indeed, a machine that repeats and repeats a meaningless, monotonous function." Puddick's face was pink. "Births, deaths," he expostulated, "deaths, births: on and on. "That." he pointed out, "that is government for you; and that's being governed—"

Claude-Maxime belched; and a striking, emaciated figure discovered itself in the doorway. It was Yvette, her antique charm, bent double and clutching her stomach; soft golden brown skin, yellow hair in magnificent coils, cheeks exquisitely sunken, a slender neck ribboned by unusual tendons—all this luxury in a saffron gown tailored for a wraith. "Mekkech!" and she was about to embrace the grim little agent when from between her clenched teeth there burst that shrill cry which had captivated the greater part of Europe.

"Cramps," Puddick interpolated, gone limp with admiration.

The dense atmosphere of depression characteristic of these dinner parties smothered this one. Liquids only were served. Claude-Maxime spooned his soup with a watchmaker's caution; he was known to suffer from haemophilia. Yvette asked after Mekkech's paintings and received desultory answers; "You're a grump to night," she declared. Sneers were exchanged; from rudeness they fell to silence; the novelist alone talked, prattling idly about an hitherto unknown poet and an undreamt of technique he had discovered and was determined to publicize.

"I've started something new myself," he added. Immediately, he repented what he had said.

Claude-Maxime coughed and spat into his napkin.

"Tell us a story, *chéri*," Yvette commanded. "Amuse us."

Puddick fixed his innocent eyes upon Mekkech; things, he knew, had gone very far, and if he knew no more, that was enough. Figures and motifs, memories and demonstrations, most of them brutal, shot through his mind—a mess, he thought, a mess, and conquered an impulse to burst out into laughter. Innumerable pages were one by one despoiled, violated, torn one after another from their insolid binding, confused by some accidental, stupid hand, then squeezed, crumpled, crushed—that hand was strong. Again and again Puddick was astonished when the remorseless fingers uncurled and exposed virtually nothing lying, defunct, in the palm; that little more than nothing, grey in color, trans-speciated from vegetable pulp into what seemed half putty and half meat, that minute blob of troubling, disagreeable matter... that, Puddick conjectured, might very well be what is called instinct; he was again tempted to laugh and checked himself. Mekkech's black eyes were looking hard at him. He was not sure; he told himself to beware of imputing too much... or of under-rating whatever it was; not to be upset by the gigantic carnage being perpetrated amongst his works, nor to exaggerate the importance of what he could not, no, think of as something new; he was determined to trust nothing, to advance with every precaution, with every suspicion alerted... he thanked his stars the blow had fallen as lightly as it had. Looking as if he were about to play a prank that was not certain to be applauded, and with an infantile smile that concealed another of cunning, he started off on an unlikely tale.

By ten, their Excellencies' drugs had taken effect, they were sound asleep. Puddick was still hanging fire, shyly protracting his introduction, setting the stage—that was his pretext; actually, he had only an intimation of whither this would lead him. Most of his clues were drawn from Mekkech's angry stare, which glowed with a steady brilliance, like some rare element burning in a vacuum. The spy's threatful presence was, furthermore, an encouragement—a comfort and a stimulus at the same time.

Long before Mekkech had got yawning to his feet and blown him a kiss, the thing was launched; gone; a pity: there was no coming back, to his much merited eminence, or to degradation's security. A term had been reached. It had, and very suddenly; there had been no warning, not a single hint; yet Puddick was surprised at nothnig unless at his apparently complete willingness to accept what, by George, looked like fate; nor had he any regrets, not a single regret. "I'm still really a young man," he said, "but I suppose I must be tired." He yawned too.

Puddick went to the window and listened: weapons and boots clattered recognition of the man risen from the dead. Puddick stood facing the still City, his brow knit, his mind concentrated upon the earliest buddings of the only project that remained to him to cultivate. He had no choice; he would have to go ahead. His headache had disappeared, he realized. That consoled him.

Dr. Samuel Johnson would have turned in his kit of tools. They would have been checked and very probably found in order by the foreman of the section, Whittich, who, peering narrowly through the corroding haze of oil vapor and exhaust fumes, would have said that it was all grist for the mill, eh ? In the blue fluorescence, Whittich's teeth, used by a decade in some allied power's lead mine, would have jumped like dots on soiled dice: That, for a philosopher, time, no matter how it was spent, was never lost; that, from his, Whittich's, viewpoint, it had been a pleasure. Keys might have scraped, Whittich have tittered; Puddick knew the sort: decades of masticating a cud of motive.

Puddick beheld it clearly; he was satisfied. "It has been a pleasure," he repeated, smiling. The terrain was becoming more and more familiar.

"On the whole," said Johnson, "it has." Ceremoniously, they shook hands and bade each other farewell. Then, at gunpoint, Johnson, who would have been wholly conscious of what he was about, of his movements, flooded—yes, flooded with an illumination, squared evenly against his instinct come awake and alert, wholly conscious of his movements and formation, breathless but feeling, indeed, that he had never known a more lucid hour, Johnson would have walked further into the trap.

Once arrived in the chaplain's office, Johnson asked:

"What have we here ?"

The chaplain, a lad fresh from the seminary, sat on the floor, his legs tucked beneath him, his full pleated gown spread in a circle. He met the Doctor's cyclopean glance with confidence; he tossed back his head, opened wide his little mouth, and spoke lispingly of the past, of the future. "May thou go forth a new man," said he, lowering his eyelids and arching one brow provocatively.

The Doctor produced a friendly smile and with a touch of nostalgia in his voice said that, after all, one seldom changes in any fundamental sense. The small priest shrugged; silently, Johnson besought the protection of his gods-in-hiding.

"What was that you said ?"

"I was praying."

The boy cocked his little head. When he spoke, his lips writhed about the consonants; it was as if he were speaking to a foreigner. "May thou go forth a new man, with thy chin uplifted, my son. Know full well that no mortal hath the right to reproach thee thy fault; not one amongst us is entirely unblemished by faults; thine hath been expiated with dignity and humility."

"Tush," murmured the prisoner. He retrieved clothes and belongings confiscated eighteen years ago; of his money, he found not above half missing.

"... faith, hope, and charity," concluded the chaplain, radiant, advancing his little hand. Johnson bent, turned it, kissed it; then left the jail at the stroke of six.

Liberty, he noticed, weighed lightly upon his shoulders; resolved not to become its dupe, he picked his way carefully down the empty, cheerless streets.

Naturally enough, his first thoughts, although they would have been strong, would also have been confused.

Eighteen years below ground, in artificial light and noxious air, within a narrow world, engulfed by common men harmless because kept well in harness, but waiting, those common men, waiting through eternities, with hope waiting to detonate their small cartridges of energy and go off valiantly in the lightless deeps of an unsounded sea. He reflected; yes, he said, it had to be acknowledged: there was something there: it had dimensions: it had to be reckoned with. He went about his remembering scientifically—dead men, men practically dead, can dispense with passion. Eighteen years of... watching them: every nerve, every muscle alerted to anticipate their unreason, to foil the thrust of pure chance tensing in them all, his frail dying self face to face with their steel-bright inexhaustible raw strength glinting through the rags of common mute flesh, through the poor decency fastened over them by an almost entirely psychic repression; watching a common goodness that, unmotivated, could at any instant deliquesce and against which, as defense, he had only stealth and craft. Watching the possibility of hell's complete authentication beside the tubs of paraffin, in the library, while they ambled about the courtyard playing a listless rugby match, the day at least twenty-five of his mates consulted a warden about impurity after an afternoon in their little theatre. Pitying that hell, pitying it generously, but, owing to a pernicious ounce of enduring mortality in the center of this dungheap a-dying, fearful of its ruinous, definitive heat. He and they, the whole pack, with their micrometers and calipers and socket-wrenches and defective paintspray masks—it was downright incredible—, he and they, the whole pack: damned to implacable enmity. Wringing lugs, replacing condensers, looking at picture books. The worst of it all, that which especially condemned, was the rock-ribbed imperative of cleverness, of deceit, of treachery, of going inwards, further and further until one was asneak in one's nasty essence. That impudent little fellow was right; inconstancy works hand in glove with the spark of life sunk in flesh's trash and rot. Ruefully, Johnson admitted his infidelity; it would be too much to expect the gods, themselves in trouble, to understand. He had not been free five minutes and he had already realized the worst: all hope of pardon had disappeared; and all hope of success. There they went, the hopes, rising up, buoyant, like particles of steam, or like the little winged figure that departs a body with its breath and its soul; he was not far from that. He and the others were irreparably at swordspoint: neither his doing, nor theirs, but thus it was: cleverness, deceit, treachery—those were the devices, and he had adopted a defensive posture: thus, he had started as half an aggressor. Another account of the situation might, he knew, be given; there were unlimited ways for procuring justification, and they were false. Ordinary explanations were worthless; for, he argued, one need but advance them and the case against one is lost: one is thoroughly the aggressor. He beheld the flames. In eighteen years' time, the ornithologist, academy member and heir, one-eyed Johnson had acquired a certain perspective during his fencer's apprenticeship. Today, he walked abroad, at large, but all the same he was dogged by scruple, freighted by scruple, and his outline was marred by lumps of fear that clung like wens to his skin and, he observed when he scrutinized himself in a black glass, were making a ruin of his once smooth silhouette. Death made slow progress. Knowingly, he put one foot forward, then the other, stepping further into the general snare. He had re-entered the nation.

Now, look here, he thought, passing his hand across his brow, other ingredients had thickened the dream. Ah ! indeed, there had been the food. Dreadful food. Never would he forget that. How great was his debt to the food! Up until his imprisonment, during his earlier incarnation, the major things had been birds and food, sky-watching and eating. The prison food had had its own evolution: had begun bad, got worse, pursued an ascending curve; had risen towards mystery, and he had uncomplainingly followed into spheres of perfect exhilaration—places of which he, born with no great imagination, had never suspected the existence. He owed it all to the food. Now, that was something to fix his attention upon; it could even be cherished, rather. At first, he had lain still, in terror; the tiny demon caged in his dying had gone on gnawing and struggling and proposing; lured on by hunger, he had ventured into high places—there, he was distracted and forgot the pain. There, he had learned there is a maximum degree and quantity of fear, that there is such a thing as fearlessness; never had he resolved to take it for his own, no, but that it existed—like the old half legendary, the old mysterious weeds like ravensleek or dwarfdwostle, spurge or henbane—had caused him to ponder.

For the rest, noise: as antidotes, there had been the beating whirr of ventilators, incessant roar of engines, smash of presses, grate of abrasive wheels. At large, he glanced about him, and listened: nothing stirred in that quarter of the City. It was submissive, in it he was alone; underground, the manufacture raced on tirelessly. He felt no strong emotion—no indeed, he would have no more of that. Nor was he as critical, as testy as he had expected he would be. It is not every evening one is released from prison, he said, to himself and experimentally; and observed the phrase to fall, sodden, upon his heart. To save himself cabfare, he decided to walk home, proceeded several more paces, then said to himself: It is not every evening one contemplates an eighteen years' term of exemplary behaviour in jail for an offense one never really committed; and again noticed the indifference of an organ which, he had once long before supposed, was articulated so as to resound to bold, clean strokes of that kind.

The sun was setting in wretched circumstances; Dr. Johnson deigned to look with compassion at the whore in the sky, at the obscene flux of color, the last, perhaps most sordid of industry's achievements. Had he not been long in a cave ? and what was it, once again, he had become ? and what was the situation that obtained between him and the others ? Was he to burst into a fit of weeping, or of civism, or of joy ? Were his rights restored to him ? His duties ? Of course not. He was sensible of the plight of his kind, he was sympathetic; everything in due measure. Of that plight, because it is common, over-spreading everything, everywhere, evidently unchangeable, he, who had changed, had come to recognize there is really nothing to say; everything in due measure. Even if that plight cries itself aloud—it is apt to—, it is nevertheless, and for that very reason, something upon which to be silent. Silence—that was doing his best. In all seriousness, he took a resolution; his heart—that sturdy, unimpressionable heart—had become involved. The evening wind carried remote sounds of collective lament; those well-trained choruses were tuning up for a concert; from isolated points came, now, a few squeaks of individual rage and agonized squeals. There was the same heavy odor of corruption, prosperity, technique, the dependable nearly-human smell. But he and his heart were firm. About heaven and earth and his fellows he had no information to broadcast.

There was at least vigor in that wind which failed of freshness; rooftop masts flew flags caught by spotlights. Another fatal springtime, characterized by the upsurgent, indomitable tiger sewn on the blazons, was at hand, crouching for its leap at their throats. After the winter horror, a season of dryness, with its menace of conflagration and preachments of apocalypse; then, about the fifteenth of May, by the twentieth at the latest, in answer to the world's prayers and the situation's needs, rain: heads would fall like rain. Thirsts—only in prison had be begun to appreciate their magnitude—, mighty thirsts would be slaked, and better.

He passed several of last Thursday's wrecks and heaps of burned and unburned dead. This evening, the amusements were being carried off in another district of the City. Posters and informations were glued everywhere, wrinkled, crisp, bright; like roasted citizens. Johnson, eighteen years out of touch, looked at the news, appraised it; in their ugliness and startled print he saw his vitality and beauty, and he laughed. He felt hungry, and quickened his pace.

Irma opened the door and flung wide her arms. The Doctor kept his distance. "Now, now, my good woman. Enough."

"You're just the same," she gasped.

"Really ? That's kind of you. And you've not changed either. Do you think," he asked, lowering his voice and carefully entering his flat, "do you think, on this short notice, that you could prepare... a large dinner ?"

She was staring slackjawed. "Did they convict you ?"

"Dear, oh dear. You can be sure they did. A large dinner, Irma. Duck—*canard à l'orange*, it would seem to me, with... virtually everything."

"So you've done time," she breathed, a look of craftiness hastening towards her moist eyes.

"Mind what you're about, Irma." He closed the door. "Callers ? Mail ?" She stuffed her fingers into her large blue mouth; he glanced at the brass tray lying on the table by the umbrella stand, and at the card lying upon the tray. He read the name, turned the card, enquired : "Tonight ?" Irma nodded. "Run along, my dear," the Doctor sighed; "I'll dine at half past eight. That gives you an added thirty minutes."

"Duck !" shouted the maid, and fled.

It is not every evening one returns from eighteen years in prison, where one has been, unjustly it would appear, confined for having killed a man one maintained one did not kill; confined under exceptionally difficult conditions; and then one returns home to find one's alleged victim intends to pay one an after-dinner visit. Dr. Johnson walked into his study. He made a rapid inventory of his stuffed birds; on tip-toes, he assured himself Irma was busy in the kitchen, then dashed back to peep quickly into his filing cabinets and at his trophies again; the desk, which he came to next, seemed as he had left it; his papers were there, his pen lay uncapped, the contents of an open ink-bottle had evaporated to black dust.

He sat down and concentrated on being more of the new self that had emerged from an ordeal. "Mekkech will surely have to apologize for this. After all, I have been grossly imposed upon. It could have been fatal. I have no choice but to demand an explanation." Despite himself and the near fatality of the thing, he could not suppress a smile. He poured himself a drink, sat fondling this chin of his he was to keep uplifted, then began to write a report. Two sentences established, he paused; he studied his fingers, the torn nails, a few healed cuts, that dark grease wedged into the pores. "If, then, anything is possible—"

It had not always been thus; to be sure. He wrote rapidly. If his hand shook, it was because of the excitement with which he awaited his dinner.

The Doctor was long at table. The blinds were drawn. He ate in secrecy: illicit are the most perfect loves. When solitude is the state into which a man is driven, he reasoned, and where he is kept whether he will or no, then whatever he does flies judgment; and even if what he does be the worst, there can be nothing reprehensible there; provided he be strong, are not the enfeebled gods, appalled and awestruck by his example, safely on his side ? Why, ought they not be honored by his alliance ? It was a kind of gamble.

Only a soul that has known the raptures of mystic communion, or something roughly corresponding to Johnson's great famine in prison, only a believing spirit will understand and approve his total submission to duck and wine, his abrupt and complete forgetfulness of the world, in which he was a stranger, and of its myriad unfed, who were as naught according to every view but the one he had left, with his passions, behind him in jail. Masked, incognito, civilization sat in widow's weeds at his right hand, regarding his fierce pleasure, sharing his sanctuary, yoked to the fate of his gambit. It was a significant moment—that much he knew—; during it, those were his thoughts; he sipped white wine, then red; when the moment had passed and he was full, he lit a cigar and resumed work on his report. Finally, Mekkech joined him in his study.

Until then, Dr. Johnson—and he deplored it—had never successfully mastered the ill-feeling he bore his old friend; and, on his side, the agent had never entirely overcome the aversion, indeed the disgust he had for persons who were, even as its victims, defiled by contact with the State.

But upon catching sight of each other, the two men's hearts very nearly melted; Mekkech's fury and Johnson's grievances vanished; all reserve, or virtually all, went the way of rancor; they chattered—guardedly, it is true—like boys of twelve, bursting for no obvious reason into flights of stringently controlled merriment and raillery.

The dining room table was littered with evidence. It caught Mekkech's eye. "You had a marvelous dinner—don't deny it !"

"And I deserved it. The first in ages."

"I've come from the Accuser's."

"No ! But of course."

"He wanted to see me. He did see me. That was that. Good God—"

"Poor chap—"

"Who ? Do you mean me ?"

"You. Had I only known ! Irma provided enough for the whole City."

"I dare say. But you do look sleek ! Devil take you !"

"How did it go there ? Are they still abusing themselves ? Has Yvette still got worms ? Lost any more weight ? In the factory I overheard a rumor Claude-Maxime would not last the spring."

"It's worse than ever before. And your own hell ? You know, Samuel, you are to be envied."

"Do you think so ?"

"I've never seen you in better form."

"It's all form, old chap. Actually, there's not much to say. It was purely a question of the food. I was a riveter—"

"A riveter !" The agent roared.

"Yes, indeed I was. We were out of harm's way down there—more or less. The place is kept very clean—as clean, that is to say, as can be expected—, and while one is prevented from contaminating others, it also works the other way. Mekkech, dear fellow, after all that protection it takes some courage to come back here. These reports—"

"That's the effect, is it ? Contempt for fear. Don't tell me your first impulse upon getting out of prison was to return to it ! Wonderful !"

"At the back of my mind—"

"Oh, your mind. Extraordinary. But, to be serious, one can't voluptuate forever, there are surely matters to attend to."

"No."

"There aren't ?" A shadow flitted across Mekkech's brow.

"Nothing urgent."

"Really ?"—a hint of anger in the agent's voice.

"Nothing."

"Then—"

Soberly looking his old friend, his first friend, directly in the eye, Dr. Johnson said once again that there was nothing; unfortunately.

For twenty years the agent had lived alone, shunning the company, the confidence, the affection of others; hating them for their weakness, hating the injuries their weakness invited, the injuries to which their weakness compelled them to be subject, compelled him to work upon them. Never had he brought but evil tidings; a plague to others, never had he left off insulting himself; till now he was elevated to a singular ignominy, to a high level of crime, no less, no more than a weapon long use had made sick unto death of destruction, that meanest, most common of things. And so his gaze that envenomed roved and fell before his youth's companion who had purchased an immunity his, Mekkech's, dark activities utterly without meaning, probably without consequence, had only thrust further from his grasp. He had, they both would have agreed, been born to something better than excellence amongst the vicious; he had been born in another place. He suffered.

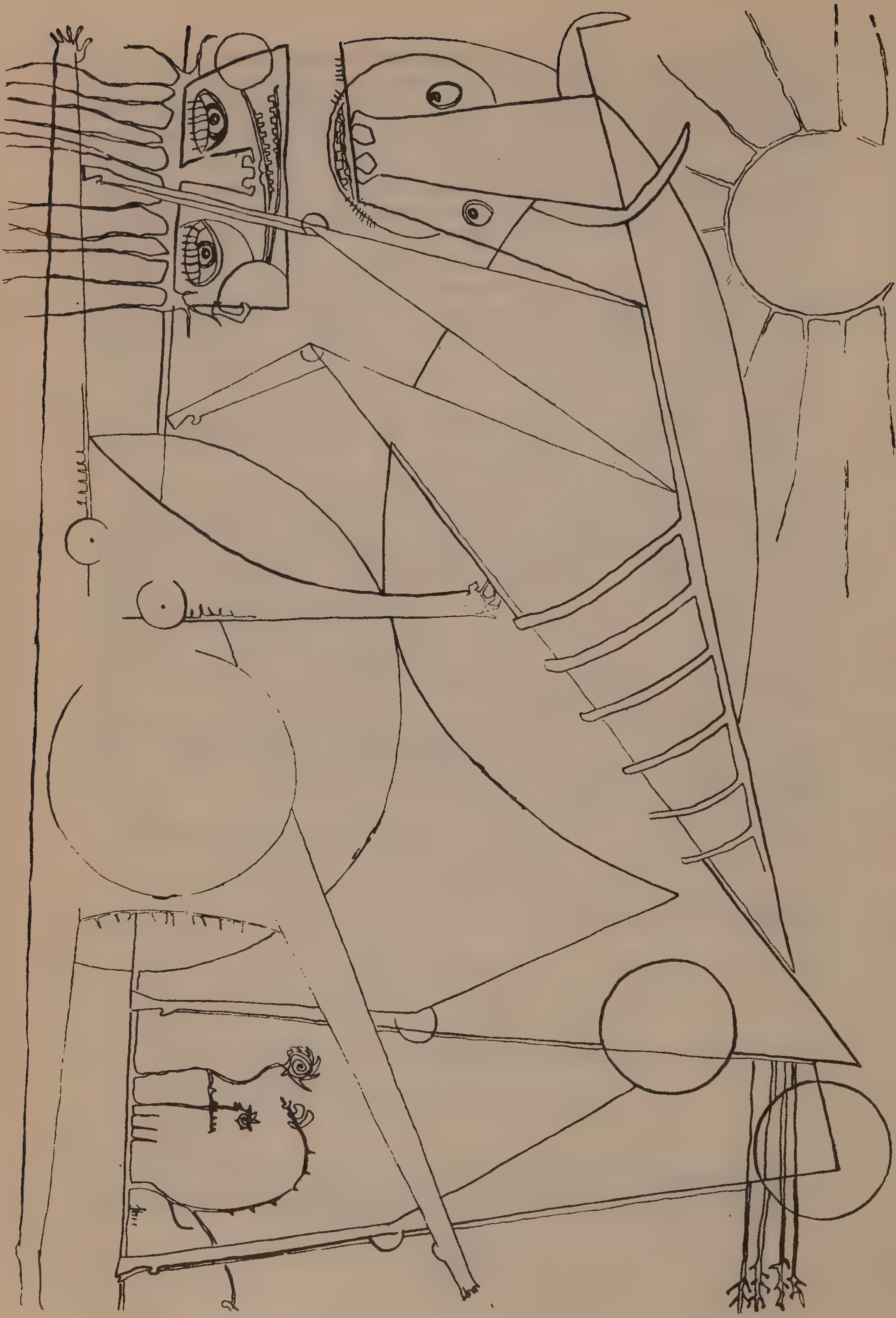
"Say the word, then," he murmured; and straightway began to sulk.

"Matters take care of themselves..." The lonely eye unblinking fixed the Mekkech of twenty years' dishonor.

"Samuel, they've turned you into a bloody bore," said he; it was not untrue; all the happiness and its fiction were banished. "Look here, you must be careful;" and as he spoke his humor's poison turned upon himself. *Careful !* The Doctor made no reply. "You know, you must be very careful. As a matter of fact, you might be betrayed." Mekkech grimaced, then said: "I've reason to be quite certain of it. There are spies—you are aware of it, aren't you ?" Again he paused. "I'm one, for example. You could be sent back to prison. As a matter of fact, that's what is going to happen."

And although they stayed together for most of the night, unwilling, each, to be alone, they took little delight in each other's presence. For either of them, any kind of presence would have sufficed.

—Austryn Wainhouse



(This is the beginning of a long poem entitled "The River")

SOURCE

One was pale as barley water
one was red as after slaughter
one was blue as blue as Uthyr

I

SATURNALIA
carrier of the moon-knife
glad also for the mistletoe
groin of the twig
the three-fold knot
triptych on the stone altar
my young also suck blood

And this for pruning by a son
                not once or twice but of the cosmical number

Cronos I am

And they shall break in pieces
mighty men without number
                to appease the earth
                by Samothrace
                Leuce
                the place of quails, Ortygia
                by Circe's elysium atlanta
ask of me there   or there
or of my son   or my son's son
unto the number of the universe

Cronos I am
but without the marks of resurrection on me...

Worship the healer and the healed.

Immortal are they that carve their names upon water
nor are great stories easily forgotten

my cassock is red with the blood of alder
I have nine hundred tales to make the monks tremble

came I as Gwion
as Taliesin
is not my brow the shape of weir water ?
came I to harmony
and gold and great horses and intoxicating mead

master of riddles I am
valiant in battle by the crimson heroes of the triads

defyer of Ceridwen thy scream of hags
thy jaws of dogs
thy jaws of otters
thy beak of hawks
even thy peck of the black cannibal hen
thy womb of iron I cracked for hate of thee
all things that were I knew all things that are and are to be

I carry the token of resurrection
three nights I was in the caer of Mystery
with the Gwen of Pendragon
in the prison of Illusion
under Cymmreint

for it is in the nature of the cub when
born to lie dead for three days and
nights for he is born dead and then
the lion opens a shout in his ears
until the soul enters into him

equal is this privilege for those that come and go by Avalon

but unremitting from the sword's edge make the fire leap
to the defending ramparts of the world...

Worship the slayer and the slain.

Two opposing mirrors are enough to make infinity but nature alone has the quality of sacrament

am I not called Uthyr the exceeding blue ?...

Worship the singer and the song.

II

And Bran directed that his head should be cut off
and it was done
                    Cronos and Bran be one

and I saw the hundred pillars of his house of kings
                    blood was upon them
and I saw the colonades of Bran grow in the blood
and soar unto the heavens of the west

wonders I watched in that sanctuary

and there was a journey to come
                    Bran's head and the multitude
        by the expanding waters
        by the hard lands
        by the everlasting rivers
came upon London

There is a caer of delight lifted on high
upon Ambri, white mount of the south
in the song of the wind from the south upon Ambri

It has obtained the praise of clustered spears
On the mount live the progeny of the primordial ravens
Let the wrath of them rise, long their wings above Ambri

Over their memories let there be no covering
Let the wrath that is in the fates burst through the stones

Deep is the prophecy of the diviner or wrens
and I shall have a judge in days of impartiality

        sang thus the bards of Owain
        sang thus the bards of Maelgwn

who set Bran upon Ambri and his house also
and established the kingdom.

III

Before my time nothing of significance
said Thucidides

Strabo was long sighted but blind

Thus do I sing of that time and this time and out of time
calling back the songs of my ancestry
calling forth new songs to delight their delicate hearing

Out of thine own land's springtime
like Artemis refresh thy virginity
say thine own land's summer

Turn thyself to this sun
for he is old and wise and bringeth ripeness in season

Hath he not waited this thousand year
for the great wind of the song ?

Archdeacon Walter cut out the tongues of many kings
and the tongues spoke unto him saying

> The monks are a pack of dogs in the Cor
> from the contest between them and their teacher
> The monks are as a pack of the wolfish breed
> from the contest between them and their teacher
> They know not when the night and the dawn are divided
> nor what is the course of the wind, what its resting place
> in what place it expires, on what land it spreads.

And Walter twice taught the tongues new words
First to hide from men the bitterness of the song
Second to make light of the darkness of the song

Yet have I heard thee Taliesin singing in the darkness
and the darkness was a light to mine eyes
Were not the very trees hushed in their perfection
to hear thy magic ?...

There is a calm dew falling

See the offering of wheat
and the liquor that bees have collected
and resin
and exotic aloes
and shining orpiment
and pleasant silver
and the gem and the grain
from the ocean foam
the cress over which the fountain hurries
and moon-influenced
placid, pleasing vervain
and the understanding of the fixed stars
and the virtue of the stars and the moon
and the influence of their clear aspect
and bards with flowers
and dark hidden treasures
and primroses and herbs
and to most sprigs of trees

Truly there shall be a purifying tree
fruitful in its increase
over the five-woods cauldron

And the stream of Gwion
and the serene intercourse
and the honey and the trefoils
and the intoxicating mead horn
boon of the Druids
suitable for the ruler

But Walter cut out the tongues of many kings
and Tysilio lighted the darkness and destroyed the darkness

history out of myths
statues out of gods

created from the numbers of serpents
a great viper of excessive windings
denied the cauldron for the gradalis
corrupted the code of the kingdom
made acta and legenda fit for Christendom
and quenched the brazen arrows of the Celtic lyre.

—Patrick Brangwyn

CHRONICLES

S. S. OBERSTURMFÜHRER DOKTOR MENGELE

The Germans invaded Hungary on March 19, 1944, and immediately consigned all Jews to house-arrest. Deportations began soon afterwards. In April, together with all the Jews of his city, Dr. Miklos Nyiszli was shipped to Auschwitz. Until January 1945 he was employed there as a Sonderkommando—the specially qualified and privileged group of prisoners attached to the crematorium military personnel. Selections from Dr. Nyiszli's journals follow.

These extracts, translated from the Hungarian by M. Tibère Kremer, first appeared in Les Temps Modernes *(March and April 1951), with whose permission they are reproduced here in an English version. This first installment will be succeeded by a second and last in the next issue of MERLIN.*

The Translators

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Dr. Nyiszli Miklos, physician, former prisoner of the KZ. Number 8450, declare that this work, which relates the darkest days in the History of Mankind, was drawn up by me in strict accordance with reality, and without the slightest exaggeration, in my capacity as an eye-witness and involuntary participant in the work of the Auschwitz crematoriums, into whose fires millions of fathers, mothers and children disappeared.

As chief physician of the Auschwitz crematoriums I drafted numerous affadavits of dissection and forensic medicine findings which I signed with my own tattoo number. I sent these documents by mail, countersigned by my superior, Dr. Mengele, to the Berlin-Dahlem address of the "Institut für rassenbiologische und anthropologische Forschungen", one of the most qualified medical centres of the Third Reich. It should still be possible to find them today in the archives of this Research Institute.

In writing this work I am not aiming for any literary success. When

I lived through these horrors, which are beyond all imagining, I was not a writer but a doctor. Today, in telling about them, I write not as a reporter but as a doctor.

Done at Oradea-Nagyvarad, March 1946.

Dr. Miklos Nyiszli.

⁂

...My attention is immediately drawn by an immense square chimney, built of red bricks, tapering towards the summit. It towers over a two-storey building and looks like a strange factory chimney. I am struck first by the immense flames rising between the lightning conductors set at angles on the square tops of the chimneys. I try to imagine what hellish cooking would require such a tremendous fire. Suddenly I realise that we are in Germany, the land of crematory ovens. I spent ten years in this country, first as a student, later as a doctor. I known that even the smallest city has its crematorium.

So the factory is a crematorium. I little farther on I catch sight of a second building with its chimney. Almost hidden in a thicket I find a third whose chimneys are spewing the same flames. A faint wind brings the smoke towards me. My nose, then my throat, is filled with the nauseating odour of burning flesh and scorching hair. —Plenty of food for thought here. But meanwhile the second phase of selection begins. In single file, men, women, children, the aged, must pass before the selection committee.

Dr. Mengele—the medical selector—makes a sign. They line up again in two groups. The colum on the left includes the aged, the crippled, the feeble, and women with children under fourteen. The column on the right is made up of ablebodied men and women: those able to work. In this latter group I notice my wife and fourteen year old daughter. We have no longer any way of speaking to each other; we exchange signs.

Those too sick to walk, the aged and the mad, are loaded into Red Cross vans. Some of the elderly doctors in my group ask if they can also get into the vans. The cars depart, then the lefthand group, five abreast, accompanied by SS guards, moves off in its turn. In a few minutes they are out of sight, cut off from view by a thicket of trees.

The righthand column has not moved. Doctor Mengele orders all doctors to step forward; he then approaches the new group, composed of some fifty doctors, and asks those who have studied in a German university, who have a thorough knowledge of pathology and have practised forensic medecine, to come forward.

"Be very careful", he adds. "You must be equal to the task; for if you're not—" and his menacing gesture is charged with meaning. I look at my companions. Perhaps there are no specialists among them; perhaps they are intimidated. What does it matter! I've already made up my mind. I break ranks and present myself. Dr. Mengele questions me closely, asking me where I studied, the names of my pathology professors, how I acquired a knowledge of forensic medicine, how long I practised, etc. Apparently my answers were satisfactory, because he separates me immediately from the others and orders my colleagues to return to their places. For the moment they are spared. Because I must now say what I did not then know, namely, that the lefthand group and those who went off in cars passed, a few moments later, through the doors of the crematorium. Whence no one has ever returned.

⁂

At seven in the morning: reveille. The doctors in my section, as well as the personnel of the hospital, line up in front of the barracks to be counted. That takes about 2 or 3 minutes. They also count those who are sick in bed, as well as last night's dead. Here too the dead are stretched out beside the living.

During breakfast, which we take in our rooms, I meet my colleagues. The head doctor of barracks-hospital number 12 is Dr. Levy, professor at the University of Strasbourg; his associate is Dr. Gras, professor at the University of Zagreb; both are excellent practicioners and known throughout Europe for their skill.

Working with defective medical equipment, without medecines, in surroundings where the most elementary aseptics and antiseptics are lacking, unmindful of their personal tragedy, unconscious of fatigue and danger, they attempt to care for and alleviate the sufferings of their fellow men.

In the Auschwitz KZ, the healthiest individual is given three or four weeks to collapse from hunger, filth, blows, and inhuman labour. How describe the state of those who upon their arrival are already organically ill?

In circumstances where it is difficult to forget that one is a human being, and a doctor besides, they practice their profession with complete devotion. Their example is faithfully followed by the subaltern medical corps composed of six doctors.

They are all young French or Greek doctors. For three years they have been eating the KZ bread made from wild chestnuts sprinkled with sawdust. Their relatives, their wives, their children, were liquidated as soon as they arrived—or, rather, burned. If by chance they were directed to the righthand column, they were unable to stand up under the ordeal for more than two or three months, and, as the "chosen", were dissolved in the furnaces.

Overcome by despair, resigned, apathetic, they attempt with the utmost devotion, to help the living-dead whose fate is in their hands. For the prisoners of that hospital *are* the living-dead. One must be seriously ill before being admitted to the KZ hospital. For the most part they are living skeletons: dehydrated to the bone, emaciated, their lips cracked, their faces swollen, and suffering from incurable dysentery. Their bodies are covered with enormous and repulsive running sores and with suppurating ulcers. Such are the KZ's sick. Such are those one must care for and comfort.

⁂

For about twelve minutes we drive through the labyrinth of barbed wire and enter well-guarded gates, thereby passing from one section to another. Only now do I realise the tremendous extent of the KZ. Few are those who have the possibility of verifying that, because the majority die at the very place to which they were directed upon their arrival. The Auschwitz concentration camp has at certain periods held more than 500,000 people within its enclosure of electrified barbed wire. Dr. Mengele suddenly interrupts my meditations. Without turning, he says: "The place to which I am taking you is no sanitorium, but you will live under conditions which are not too bad."

We leave the camp and for about 300 yards skirt the Jewish unloading ramp. A large armoured gate in the barbed wire opens behind the guard. We go in; there before us lies a spacious courtyard, clean and covered with green grass. The gravel paths and the shade of the pine trees would have made the place almost pleasant had there not been, at the end of the courtyard, an enormous red-brick building and a chimney spitting flame. We are in one of the crematoriums. We stay in the car. An SS runs up and salutes Dr. Mengele. Crossing the courtyard we move past a large door and enter the buildings of the crematorium. "Is the room ready?" Dr. Mengele asks the SS who is with us. The latter replies that it is, and we head towards it. He enters; I follow him. We are in a freshly whitewashed place. The room is well lit by a large window, which however is barred. The furnishings, after those of the barracks, surprise me: a white bed; a cloakroom, also white; a large table and some chairs. On the table a red velvet tablecloth. The concrete floor is covered with handsome rugs. I have the impression that I am expected. The Sonderkommando men have painted the room and outfitted it with objects that the preceding convoys left behind. Thence, through a dark corridor, we reach another room. We are in a very bright, completely modern dissecting room, with two windows. The floor is of red concrete; in the center of the room, mounted on a concrete base, is a dissecting table of polished marble equipped with several drainage channels. At the edge of the table a basin with nickel taps has been installed; against the wall, three porcelain sinks. The walls are painted with a light green oil paint. The large barred windows are equipped with green metal screens to keep out flies and mosquitoes.

We leave the dissection room for the next room: the work-room. Here there are fancy chairs and paintings: in the center of the room, a large table covered with green cloth; all about, comfortable armchairs. I count three microscopes on the table. In one corner a large library filled with medical books, among which the most recent editions. Another closet contains white smocks, aprons, towels and rubber gloves. In short, an exact copy of any large modern city's institute of pathology.

I take it all in, paralysed with fright. As soon as I came through the main gate, I realised that I was on death's path. A slow death opening its maddening depths before me. I feel that I am lost.

I understand why I was given civilian clothes. This is the uniform of the Sonderkommando—the Kommando of the living dead.

My chief gets ready to leave; he gives the SS guard to understand that, as far as "service" is concerned, I depend exclusively on him. The crematorium's SS personnel has no jurisdiction over me. The SS kitchen must provide my food; I can get my linen and supplementary clothing at the SS warehouse. For shaves and haircuts, I have the right to use the SS barber shop in the building. I need be present neither for the evening nor morning roll-call.

Besides my laboratory and anatomical work, I am also responsible for the medical care of all the crematorium's SS personnel—about 120 men—as well as the Sonderkommandos—about 860 prisoners. Medecines, medical instruments, dressings, all in sufficient quantity, are at my disposal. So that they may receive suitable medical attention, I must visit all those sick in the crematorium once a day, and sometimes even twice. I can circulate among the four crematoriums without a guard from seven in the morning till seven in the evening. I have to make out a daily report to the SS commandant and to the Sonderkommando Oberscharführer Mussfeld, listing the number of ill, bedridden and ambulatory patients.

I listen, almost paralysed, to the enumeration of my rights and duties. Under such conditions, I should be the Sonderkommando's most important figure, were I not in the Sonderkommando and were all this not taking place in the "Number One Krema".

Dr. Mengele leaves without a word. Never does an SS, no matter how low in rank, greet a KZ prisoner. I lock the door to the dissecting room; from now on it is my responsibility.

⁂

The drawn-out whistle of a train can be heard coming from the direction of the ramp. It is still very early; I approach my window, whence I have a direct view on to the tracks. I see a very long train. A few seconds later, the doors slide back and the boxcars spill out thousands upon thousands of the chosen people of Israel. Line-up and selection take scarcely half an hour. The lefthand column moves slowly away.

Orders ring out, and the sound of rapid footsteps reaches my room.

The sounds come from the furnace rooms of the crematorium: they are preparing to welcome the new convoy. One hears the throb of motors. They have just set the enormous ventilators going to fan the flames, in order to obtain the desired degree in the ovens. Fifteen ventilators turn at the same time: there is one beside every oven. The incineration room is about 150 yards long: bright, whitewashed, with a concrete floor and barred windows. Each of the fifteen ovens is housed in a red-brick structure. Immense iron doors, well-polished and gleaming, ominously line the length of the wall. In five or six minutes the convoy reaches the gate whose swing-doors open inwards. Five abreast, the group enters the courtyard; it is the moment about which the outside world knows nothing, for whoever might have known something about it, after having travelled the path of his destiny—the 300 yards separating that spot from the ramp—has never returned to tell about it. It's one of the crematoriums which awaits those who have been selected for the lefthand column. And not, as the German lie made the righthand column suppose, in order to allay their anxiety, a camp for the sick and children, where the infirm care for the little ones.

They advance with slow, weary steps. Children, their eyes heavy with sleep, hang to their mothers' clothes. For the most part the babies are carried in their fathers' arms, or else wheeled in their carriages. The SS guards remain before the crematorium doors, where a poster announces that "Entrance is Strictly Forbidden to All Who Have No Business Here, Including SS ".

The deportees immediately notice the water faucets, used for sprinkling the grass, that are arranged about the courtyard. They get ready to bring pots and pans from their luggage. They break ranks; pushing one another, they try to get near the faucets to fill their containers. That they are impatient is not astonishing; for the past five days they have had nothing to drink. If ever they found a little water, it was stagnant and did not quench their thirst. The SS guards who receive the convoys are habituated to the scene. They wait patiently till each has quenched his thirst and filled his container. In any case, the guards know that, as long as they haven't drunk, there is no getting them back into line. Slowly, they begin to reform their ranks. They advance for about 100 yards, along a cinder path edged with green grass, to an iron ramp, whence 10 or 12 concrete steps lead underground to an enormous room whose facade bears a large sign in German, French, Greek and Hungarian: "Baths and Disinfecting Room". Seeing it, those who suspect nothing, and even those who had certain doubts, are reassured, calmed. Almost gaily they go down the stairs.

The room into which the convoy is led is about 200 yards long, its walls whitewashed, powerfully lit. In the middle of the room, rows of columns. Around the columns, as well as along the walls, benches. Above the benches, numbered coat hangers. Numerous signs in several languages draw everyone's attention to the necessity of attaching his clothes and shoes together. Especially, that he not forget the number of his coathanger, in order to avoid all useless confusion upon his return from the bath. That's really a German order, say those who have long been inclined to admire the Germans. They're right. As a matter of fact, it is for the sake of order that these measures are taken, so that the thousands of pairs of good shoes long awaited by the Third Reich will not get mixed up. The same for the clothes. So that the population of bombed cities can without difficulty make use of them.

There are 3,000 people in the room, men, women and children. Some of the soldiers arrive and announce that everyone must be completely undressed within ten minutes. The aged, grandfathers and grandmothers; the children; wives and husbands; all are struck dumb with surprise. Modest women and girls look at each other questioningly. Perhaps they have not exactly understood the German words. They have not long to think about it, for the order resounds again, this time in a louder, almost menacing tone. They are uneasy; their dignity rebels, but, with the resignation peculiar to their race, they have learned that anything goes as far as they're concerned, and slowly begin to undress. The aged, the paralysed, the mad are helped by a Sonderkommando squad sent for that purpose. In ten minutes all are completely naked, their clothes hung on the pegs, their shoes attached together by the laces. As for the number of their clothes hanger, it has been carefully noted.

Making his way through the crowd, an SS opens the swing-doors of the large oaken gate at the end of the room. The crowd flows through it into another equally well-lighted room. This second room is the same size as the first, but neither benches nor pegs are to be seen. In the center of the room, at thirty-yard intervals, columns rise from the concrete floor to the ceiling. They are not supporting columns. but square sheet-iron pipes, each of whose sides contains numerous perforations, like a wire lattice.

Everyone is inside. A hoarse command rings out: SS and Sonderkommando leave the room. They obey and count off. The doors swing shut and from without the lights are switched off.

At that very instant the sound of a car is heard. It is a de luxe model furnished by the international Red Cross. An SS officer and a SDG (Santitädienstgefreiter: Deputy Health Service Officer) step out of the car. The deputy Health Officer holds four green sheet-iron canisters. He advances across the grass, where, every thirty yards, short concrete pipes jut up from the ground. Having donned his gas mask, he lifts the pipe's lid, which is also of concrete. He opens one of the cans and pours the contents—a mauve granulated material—into the opening. The matter is either cyclon or chlorine in granulated form, which produces a gas as soon as it comes in contact with air. The granulated substance falls in a lump to the bottom. The gas it produces escapes through the perforations, and within a few seconds fills the room in which the deportees are stacked. Within five minutes everybody is dead.

For every convoy it's the same story. Red Cross cars bring the gas from the outside. There is never a stock of it in the crematorium. The precaution is scandalous, but still more scandalous is the fact that the gas is brought in a car bearing the insignia of the international Red Cross.

In order to be certain of their business, the two gas-butchers wait another five minutes. They then light cigarettes and drive off in their car. They have just killed 3,000 innocents.

Twenty minutes later the electric ventilators are set going, in order to evacuate the gas. The doors open, the trucks arrive and a Sonderkommando squad loads the clothing and the shoes separately. They are going to disinfect them. This time it is a case of real disinfection. Later, they will transport them by rail to various parts of the country.

The ventilators, patented "Exhaustor" system, quickly evacuates the gas from the room, but in the crannies between the dead and between the doors small pockets of it always remain. Even two hours later it causes a suffocating cough. For that reason the Sonderkommando group which first moves into the room is equipped with gas masks. Once again the room is powerfully illuminated. A horrible picture offers itself to the spectator's eye.

The bodies are not lying scattered a few here and there throughout the room, but piled in a mass to the ceiling. This is explained by the fact that the gas first innundates the lower layers of air and rises but slowly towards the ceiling. That forces the wretches to trample and clamber over one another. A few yards higher up the gas reaches them a little later. What a struggle for life there must have been. Nevertheless, it was merely a matter of two or three minutes' respite. If they had been able to think about it, they would have realised that they were trampling their children, their relatives, their wives. But they cannot think. Their gestures are no more than the reflexes of the instinct of preservation. I notice that at the bottom of the pile are the babies, children, women and aged; at the top, the strongest. Their bodies, which bear numerous scratches occasioned by the struggle which set them against one another, are often intertwined. The noses and mouths are bleeding, the faces, bloated and blue, are so deformed as to be unrecognisable. Nevertheless, certain of the Sonderkommando often recognise their kin. The encounter is not easy, and I dread it for myself. I have no reason to be here, and yet I have come down among the dead. I feel it my duty to my people and to the entire world to be able to give an account of what I've seen, should I by some miraculous whim of fate one day escape.

The Sonderkommando squad, outfitted with large rubber boots, lines up around the hill of bodies and floods it with powerful jets of water. This is most necessary, because the final act of those who die by drowning or by gas is an involuntary defecation. Each body is befouled. Once the "bathing" of the dead is finished—a job the Sonderkommando fulfills in the total abandon of his personality and in profound distress of soul—the separation of the intertwined bodies begins. It's a difficult job. They knot thongs to the wrists which are clenched in a vice-like grip, and, with the help of the thongs, drag the wet and slippery bodies to the elevators in the next room. Four good-sized elevators are functioning. They load twenty to twenty-five corpses to an elevator. The ring of a bell is the signal that the load is ready to ascend. The elevator stops at the crematorium's incineration room, where large sliding doors open automatically. The kommando who operates the trailers is there waiting. Again straps are fixed to the wrists of the dead and they are dragged onto specially constructed chutes which unload them in front of the furnaces.

The bodies lie in close ranks; the old, the young, the children. From their noses and mouths, as well as from their skin—abraded by the rubbing—oozes blood which mixes with the water running in the gutters dug for that purpose in the concrete floor.

⁂

As soon as their gold teeth have been removed, the bodies reach the incineration kommando. They are laid by threes on a sort of pushcart made of sheet metal. The ovens' heavy doors open automatically; the pushcart moves into a furnace heated to incandescence.

The bodies are cremated within twenty minutes. The crematorium works with fifteen furnaces. That means the daily incineration of 5,000 people. Four crematoriums function at the same capacity. In all, 20,000 people pass each day through the gas chambers and thence to the incineration furnaces. The souls of 20,000 innocents rise daily through these immense chimneys. Nothing but a thick sediment of ash remains in the crematoriums' furnaces. Trucks take them to the Vistula, two kilometers away.

⁂

At the arrival of the convoys, soldiers scout the ranks lined-up before the boxcars, hunting for twins and dwarfs. Mothers, hoping for special treatment for them, unhesitatingly give up their twin children. Adult twins know that they are of interest from a scientific point of view; in the hope of better conditions they voluntarily present themselves. The same goes for the dwarfs.

They are separated from the rest and herded to the right. They are permitted to keep their civilian clothes; guards accompany them into barracks specially designed for them, where they are treated with a certain regard. Their food is good, their bunks comfortable. Possibilities for hygiene are provided, and they are well treated.

They are in barracks 14 of camp F, whence they are led by their guardians to the experimentation barracks of the gypsy camp... There they are exposed to every medical examination that can be performed on human beings. Blood tests, lumbar punctures, exchanges of blood between twin brothers, as well as numerous other examinations, all fatiguing and depressing. Dina, the painter from Prague, executes the comparative studies of the twins' skull structure, ear structure, noses, mouths, hands and feet. Each drawing is classified in a file set up for that purpose, complete with all individual characteristics; into this file will also go the final results of this research. The procedure is the same for the dwarfs.

These experiments, in medical language called *in vivo*, i. e., experiments performed on live human beings, are far from exhausting the research possibilities in the study of twins. They are full of lacunae and offer no better than partial results. The *in vivo* experiments are succeeded by the most important phase of twin-study: the comparative examination from the viewpoints of anatomy and pathology. Here it is a question of comparing the twins' healthy organs with those functioning abnormally, or of comparing their illnesses. For that study, as for all studies of a pathological nature, corpses are needed. Since it is necessary to perform a dissection for the simultaneous evaluation of anomalies, the twins must die at the same time. So it is that they meet their death in the B section of one of Auschwitz's KZ barracks, at the hand of Dr. Mengele.

The phenomenon is unique in world medical science history. Twin brothers die together, and it is possible to perform autopsies on both. Where, under normal circumstances, can one find twin brothers who die at the same place at the same time? For twins, too, are separated by life's circumstances. They live far from one another and don't have the habit of dying simultaneously. One, for instance, dies at the age of ten, the other at fifty. Under such conditions comparative dissection is impossible. In the Auschwitz camp there are several hundred sets of twins, and as many possibilities of dissection. That is why, on the arrival platform, Dr. Mengele separates twins and dwarfs from the others. That is why both special groups were directed to the righthand column, and thence to the barracks of the spared. That is why they have good food and hygienic living conditions, so that they don't contaminate each other eventually and die one before the other. They must die together and in good health.

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The Sonderkommando chief comes hunting for me and announces that an SS soldier is waiting for me at the door of the crematorium with a crew of corpse-transporting kommandos. I go in search of them. They are forbidden to enter the courtyard. I take the documents concerning the corpses from the hands of the SS. They are files on two little twin brothers. The Kommando crew, composed of women, sets the covered coffin down in front of me. I lift the lid. Within is a set of two-year-old twins. I order two of my men to take the corpses and place them on the dissecting table.

I open the file and glance through it. Very detailed clinical examinations, accompanied by X-rays, descriptions and artists' drawings indicate from the scientific viewpoint the different aspects of these two little beings' "twinhood". Only the pathological report is missing. It is my job to supply it. The two little twins died at the same time and are now lying, one beside the other, on the big dissection table. It is they who must—or whose tiny bodies must— resolve the secret of the reproduction of the race. To advance one step in the search for the way of multiplying the race of superior beings designated to rule, is a noble "goal". Were it only possible, in the future, to have each German mother bear as many twins as possible! The project is mad! Its promotors are the demented theorists of the Third Reich. The realisation of these experiments has been confided to Dr. Mengele, chief physician of the Auschwitz KZ, the notorious "Criminal Doctor".

Among malefactors and criminals, the most dangerous type is the "criminal doctor", especially when he is armed with powers such as those granted to Dr. Mengele. He sends millions of wretches to death merely because, according to a racial theory, they are inferior beings and therefore detrimental to mankind. This same criminal doctor spends hours at a time beside me, with his microscopes, disinfecting ovens and test tubes, or else, standing by the hour near the dissecting table, his smock befouled with blood, his bloody hands examining and experimenting like one possessed. The immediate objective is the increased reproduction of the German race. The final objective is the production of pure Germans in numbers sufficient to replace the Czechs, Hungarians, Poles who are condemned to be destroyed, but who are for the moment living on those territories already declared vital to the Third Reich.

I finish the dissection of the little twins and write out a regulation report of dissection. I did my job well and my chief appears to be satisfied with me. He has some trouble reading my hand-writing for all my letters are capitals. I got used to writing in that way in America; and so I tell him that if he wants clear, clean copy, I must have a typewriter, since I was accustomed to work with one in my own practice. He asks which make of typewriter I am used to. "Olympia Elit", I reply. "Very well, I shall send you one. You'll have it to-morrow. I want clean copy, because these reports will be forwarded to the Institute of Biological, Racial and Evolutionary Research at Berlin-Dahlem." I thus learn that the experiments performed here are checked by the highest medical authorities at one of the most famous scientific institutes in the world.

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The following day an SS soldier brings me an "Olympia" typewriter. Still more corpses of twins are sent me. They bring me four pairs from the gypsy camp. All four are under ten years old.

I finish the dissection of a pair of twins.

In the exterior coat of the left ventricle is a small pale red spot, caused by a hypodermic injection, which scarcely differs from the color of the tissue around it. There can be no mistake. The injection was given with a very small needle. Without a doubt it is a hypodermic needle. For what purpose did he receive the injection? Injections into the heart can be administered in extremely urgent cases, when the heart begins to fail. I shall soon know. I open the heart, starting with the ventricle. Normally the blood contained in the left ventricle is taken out by the spoonful and weighed. This method cannot be employed in the present case, because the blood is coagulated into a compact mass. I triturate the coagulum with the forceps and bring it to my nose to smell it. I am struck by the characteristic odor of chloroform. He received an injection of chloroform in the heart, so that the blood of the ventricle, in coagulating, would deposit on the valves and cause instantaneous death by heart failure.

My discovery of the most monstrous secret of the Third Reich's medical science makes my knees tremble. Not only do they kill with gas, but also with injections of chloroform into the heart. A cold sweat breaks out on my forehead. Luckily, I'm alone. Should others have been present it would have been difficult for me to conceal my excitement. I finish the dissection. I note the differences found, and put them to paper. However, the chloroform, the blood coagulated in the left ventricle, the puncture visible in the external coat of the heart, do not figure among my findings. It's a useful precaution on my part. Dr. Mengele's records on the subject of twins are in my hands. They contain the exact examinations, X-rays, the artists' sketches already mentioned, but neither the circumstances nor causes of death. Nor do I fill out that column of the dissection report. It is not a good idea to exceed the authorised bounds of knowledge or to relate all one has witnessed. And here still less than anywhere else. I am not timorous by nature and my nerves are good. During my medical practice I have often brought to light the causes of death. I have seen the bodies of people assassinated for motives of revenge, jealousy, or material gain, as well as those of suicides and natural deaths. I am used to the study of the well-hidden causes of death. On several occasions I have been shocked by my discoveries, but now a shudder of fear runs through me. If Dr. Mengele had any idea that I had discovered the secret of his injections he would send ten doctors, in the name of the political SS, to verify my death.

In accordance with orders received, I must return the corpses to the prisoners whose duty it is to burn them. They perform their job without delay. I must keep any organs of possible scientific interest, so that Dr. Mengele can examine them. Those which may interest the Anthropological Institute at Berlin-Dahlem must be preserved in alcohol. These parts are specially packed to be sent through the mails. Stamped with "War Material—Urgent" they are given top priority in transit. In the course of my work at the crematorium I have dispatched an impressive number of such packages. I have received, in reply, either precise scientific observations or instructions. In order to classify this correspondance I had to set up special files. The directors of the Berlin-Dahlem Institute always warmly thanked Dr. Mengele for this rare and precious material.

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It is already late; it is just about dark. Dr. Mengele has left and I am alone with my thoughts. Mechanically, I arrange the instruments used for the autopsy and, after washing my hands, I go into the workroom where I light a cigarette in the hope of finding a minute's peace. I hear a horrible cry which makes me shudder, and, immediately afterwards, a dull click, then the sound of a heavy body falling. I listen, my nerves stretched tight, for what the following minutes will bring. Before another minute has passed, another cry, click, and the fall of a body. I count seventy cries, as many clicks, as many thuds. Heavy footsteps move away and all grows quiet. The scene of the terrible tragedy which has just been enacted is the room adjoining the dissecting chamber; the hall leads directly to it. It is a half-darkened place whose floor is of concrete. Its barred windows look out onto the back courtyard. I use it as a storeroom for corpses. I keep them there until it is their turn for dissection, and after the autopsy, I deposit them there until they are sent to be burned. Used, dirty, women's clothes; battered wooden shoes; spectacles; pieces of stale bread—the normal run of KZ women's articles—are piled before the entrance into the room. After what I had heard I was prepared for something extraordinary. I come into the room, which is plunged in semi-darkness, and glance quickly around. A terrifying scene gradually becomes visible. Before me the naked bodies of seventy women are sprawled. Curled up, bathed in their own blood and in the blood of their neighbors, they lie here and there about the room. Approaching, I find out with horror that not all the victims are dead. Some are still breathing, moving their arms or legs slowly; their eyes haggard, they try to raise their blood-spattered heads. I lift two, three heads of those still alive, and now realise that, besides death by cyclon gas and chloroform injections, there is a third way of killing: a bullet in the back of the neck. The hole indicates that it was a six millimetre bullet, from a small calibre gun: there is no exit hole. From these observations I deduce that the projectile used was a bullet of soft lead, because only such a bullet is capable of crushing itself against the skull bones in such a way as to remain there. Unfortunately, I known something of such matters, and I quickly size up the situation in all its horror. Therefore I am not astonished that these small calibre bullets did not provoke instantaneous death in all cases. They were nevertheless fired—the powder burns on the skin prove it—from a distance of three or four centimetres and right into the spinal medulla. It appears that the bullet deviated one or two millimetres from its path; that's why it did not always bring on a lightning-swift death.

I take cognizance of that as well, but meditate no further. I am afraid of going mad. I go out into the courtyard. I ask a Sonderkommando where the women came from. "They were chosen from C section", he replies. "Every evening the truck brings seventy. They all get a bullet in the back of the neck."

My head heavy, dumbfounded, I walk along the gravel paths which cut through the well-kept lawn of the crematorium courtyard. My gaze halts upon the evening Sonderkommando muster. This evening there is no change of the guard. Number 1 crematorium is not working today. I look in the direction of crematoriums 2, 3, and 4: their chimneys are spitting flame.

It's too early for dinner. The Sonderkommando bring out a football. The teams take their places on the field. "SS vs. SK". On one side of the field the crematorium's SS guards; on the other, the Sonderkommando. They put the ball into play. Sonorous laughter fills the courtyard. The spectators, made up of SS and Sonderkommando, become excited and shout encouragement at the players as if they were on the playing field of some peaceful town. Stupefied, I note that as well, but do not wait for the end of the match. I return to my room. After having eaten supper, I swallow two tables of gardenal, of ten centigrams each.

—Dr. Miklos Nyiszli

(Translated from the French of Tibère Kremer
by R. S. and A. W.)

[*To be continued.*]

CHRONICLES

REVOLT AND REVOLUTION*

I

From either side the question: *Are you with us?*—with the implication that if you are not then you are against us. In a world of such categoric division, the position of the politically unaffianced is certainly ambiguous, perhaps even untenable. His decisions, ungeared to any party or efficient organisation, remain unapplied, his actions seem destined to sterility.

Faced with this dilemma, a small but influential group of thinkers, in Europe especially, have, since the end of the war, been trying to preserve their individual's position and to define it in terms of the historical moment. Some, like André Malraux or Louis Aragon have given up the struggle and sought refuge in the bosom of an establishment; others, like François Mauriac, have always been at suck. Still others, and they are few, like Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, accept the "absurdity" with little hope of ractical success. Of the two, Camus has been the more scrupulously independent; Sartre, already the titular head of a philosophical movement, has shown an increasing willingness to associate himself with, or to form, some mechanism which might furnish an effective instrument for his idea. There has been much talk of Camus' Mediterranean origin: he is the more Latin, taking his point of departure from the concept of "one man alone"; Sartre is more Germanic, given to thinking in terms of historical patterns. But however their points of view differ, both men are chiefly concerned with the problems essential to the human condition. Both have been condemned as atheists and pessimists, but their atheism is a common cry of revolt against the divinity's frigid indifference; their pessimism is a courageous one. In *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, Camus is careful to remark that the absence of hope is not the equivalent of despair, and Sartre wrote a very readable essay to demonstrate that Existentialism is primarily a "humanism". For Sisyphus the only possible dignity is the transcendence that comes from a consciousness of his sort: this is not a thrall but a free man: his existence is "the tenacious revolt against his condition and perseverance in an effort he knows in advance is condemned to failure." Both men, with Nietzsche, demand lucidity as the precondition to living; only by ridding oneself of all illusions preached by transparent religions and false philosophies which would sacrifice the present life for the hope of another, only by the sane realisation of the limits and implications of our mortality can we pretend to come to grips with it. Nietzsche contended that Christianity, which undertakes to combat nihilism by giving "direction to the world", is itself nihilistic in so far as it imposes an "imaginary" meaning on life. Camus, in his most recent work, *L'Homme révolté*, generalises the instance by declaring that the critical intelligence is charged to transform nihilism "from a passive to an active state"(93)* by first destroying deceptions, superstitions, and false values. Despite affinities with certain contemporary doctrines which, having destroyed God, hold out the promise of a terrestial, self-sufficient City of Man as a future end, neither Camus nor Sartre promise anything whatsoever. They are both more concerned to find an enlightened, just *modus vivendi*, by acceptance and adaptation; and, having taken such pains to destroy illusions, they have made it clear they have no intention of creating others.

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* All bracketted numbers refer to the *Gallimard* edition of *L'Homme revolté* by Albert CAMUS.

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"Many things brought us together, few separated us," Sartre wrote recently in a letter of reply to Camus, "but even those few were too many."

People who quarrel can always discover in retrospect numerous symptoms to explain the final rupture. In the present instance, however, we shall be concerned principally with the specific work which precipitated the rupture, Camus' *L'Homme revolté*. When it appeared the book received the French critics' almost unanimous approval. And that is remarkable in a country where any criticism, even of purely literary works, is inevitably influenced by a wide range of nuanced political opinion. The conservative press was especially warm in its praise, but even the non-communist Left in general acknowledged it to be one of the most significant works to appear in France since the end of the war. In May of this year, Francis Jeanson, writing in *Les Temps Modernes*, denounced the book as insidious. Camus replied in a scathing letter, not addressed directly to Jeanson, but to *Monsieur le Directeur des Temps Modernes*. Sartre published the letter in his August issue and joined to it replies by both himself and Jeanson. Thus stated, the quarrel may seem Lilliputian, but at second glance it becomes evident that the differences which separate the two men are as profound as the issues involved are vital.

II

In *L'Homme revolté* Camus undertakes to examine the problem of revolt—and of revolution—throughout history. This book is a logical successor to *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, in which, having demonstrated the existence of the *Absurd*, Camus came to the conclusion that awareness of the *Absurd* leads inevitably, not to suicide, but to revolt. Camus now proposes to investigate the revolt itself, its consequences and its relationship to violence and killing. He strikes a note of immediacy in the first pages: "You will perhaps consider that an age which, during the short space of half a century, uproots, enslaves or kills seventy million human beings should, first and foremost, be judged."(14) We are living, says Camus, in an epoch of "legitimatised murder", and goes on to distinguish between what he calls the "murder of innocence" and the "murder of reason or logic", as the Penal Code distinguishes between unmeditated and premeditated murder. "In naïve periods, when the tyrant razed cities to his greater glory, when the slave, bound to the chariot of his conqueror, was paraded through the festive city, when the enemy was thrown to the beasts before the assembled populace: before such candid crimes the mind could be resolute, the judgment clear. But camps of slaves, parading beneath the banner of freedom, massacres which are justified by the love of mankind or by the desire for super-humanity, cripple, in a sense, the power of judgment. The day when crime adorns itself in the spoils of innocence, innocence, by a curious reversal of position peculiar to our own age, is called upon to furnish its justifications."(14)

The whole question is one of determining whether or not innocence "as of the moment it first acts, can keep itself from killing." And since any action presupposes at least relative guilt, it is fundamentally a question of determining whether or not man can prevent himself from moving ineluctably towards absolute guilt.

Camus demonstrates that history is a continual tension between what he terms the time of the *sacré*, that is, the inviolable situation, and the situation of revolt.* In the inviolable world, all answers are supplied before the question itself is raised, "metaphysics is replaced by myth", and no problem of revolt is conceivable. "It would be possible to show that there are only two universes for the human mind, that of the *sacré* and that of revolt. The disappearance of one is equivalent to the appearance of the other..."(34)

Revolt, by the feeling of solidarity it is capable of creating, is one of the richest of human experiences. "In the experience of the absurd, suffering is individual. From the moment of inception of revolt, that suffering is conscious of being collective..."(36) Revolt is thus both negation and affirmation. The slave says "no", refuses at a certain point to submit to the order of his master, but that "no" implies the "yes" which is an affirmation of his own existence. The revolt of Sisyphus expresses both his hatred of death and his passion for life. "In the course of the daily ordeal which is ours, revolt plays the same rôle as the *cogito* in the order of thought."(36) But since its is collective, the Cartesian *cogito* must be doubly transformed to: "I revolt, therefore *we* are."(36) Revolt is "an essential dimension of man", a creative force common to all men, oppressor and oppressed alike: as such, it is capable of creating solidarity among them. "The solidarity of man is founded upon the impulse of revolt, and this, in turn, finds justification only in that complicity. We therefore have the right to say that any revolt which allows itself to deny or to destroy that solidarity at once loses the name of revolt and coincides, in reality, with a murderous acquiescence."(35)

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* The time of the *sacré*, according to Camus, is that wherein the idea of revolt is nonexistent as in certain primitive societies where there is absolute equality of fact, or in societies where there is great inequality of fact (certain Hindu castes). The situation of revolt, on the other hand, may be said to exist wherever a theoretic equality conceals great inequality of fact. (*Cf.* 33-34.)

Given these initial statements, it is already quite possible to foresee the conclusions Camus is preparing to reach. Having stated the problem whose symptom is the concentration camp, having asked, indirectly and rhetorically, the question: under what conditions is a revolt valid or invalid ? he has already implied the answers. No one can ignore or excuse the concentration camp which has been undeniably a phenomenon of authoritarian socialism. Again, having demonstrated the validity and necessity of revolt *per se*, Camus has nevertheless intimated that in application (i.e. as revolution) the sources of inspiration which animate any revolt are inevitably corrupted or destroyed. Or, as Jeanson suggests in his article, Camus tends to think of revolution as no more than "revolt gone bad."

Methodically, in the following two chapters, Camus builds by concrete example from art and history.

The first of these chapters is a study of what he calls "the metaphysical revolt". It is a history of the movement by which "man rises up against his condition and against the entirety of creation"(39). Any revolt must be imagined not only against some thing but also against someone. In the present instance it is man's revolt against "God the Father of death, God the silent." Mythological prototypes exist: Prometheus chained to his rock, Lucifer banished from heaven. "The notion of a personal God, creator, and therefore responsible for all things, alone gives meaning to the human protest. We can therefore say, without paradox, that the history of revolt in the western world is inseparable from the history of Christianity."(46) From the end of the eighteenth century onwards the poet tends increasingly to identify himself with Satan. "The romantic protest is really the cry of outraged innocence".(69) Because they judge themselves innocent, they renounce the pursuit of "Good" and join forces with "Evil". One with Satan, they bid farewell "to hope, but along with hope, to fear and remorse, and raise the cry: Evil be thou my God !" (68-69) De Vigny's Satan

> *...Ne peut plus sentir le mal ni les bienfaits*
> *Il est même sans joie aux malheurs qu'il a faits...*

Having shattered the notion of God's "eternal stability", having affirmed that "the idea of any superior existence is... a contradiction,"(41) the metaphysical revolt prepares for the rule of men on earth. Having rebelled against and then destroyed the conception of Divine justice, man finds himself obliged to replace it with terrestial justice. This Camus calls "the desperate attempt, at the price of crime if necessary, to found the Empire of Men."(42) Socialism then—Nietzsche was the first to proclaim it—is in reality a degenerate form of Christianity. The dilemma is thus posed: how to live in a world stripped of all law, when to live presupposes law ? Neitzsche faces the dilemma squarely: like Damocles, "man must accept the unacceptable and dance beneath the sword."(96) This newly acquired freedom, far from easing man's task, renders it all the more difficult. Neitzsche saw clearly the possible consequences involved. "If we do not make of God's death a great renunciation and a perpetual victory over ourselves, we shall have to pay dearly for that loss."(95) For Nietzsche, the world is God: "the world alone, solemn and suffering, is true."(98) But when he asks that the individual "bow before the eternity of the species and bury himself in the great cycle of time, he makes of the race a particular case of the species."(99) And it was Nietzsche who, despite the fact that he considered himself completely incapable of killing or even of going back on his word, once wrote: "When the ends are great, humanity uses another yardstick and no longer judges crime as such, however terrible the means it employs."(102) The would-be despot is understandably attracted by such a doctrine. Nietzsche himself declared that force was the alliance of courage *and* intelligence. But latter-day tyrants, borrowing Nietzsche's name and that part of his thought which served their purposes, turned courage *against* intelligence to justify the use of crime. For Nietzsche, the aristocrat or superman was he who practised virtue without asking why; less than half a century after Nietzsche's death, the Nazi régime called upon the individual, again in the name of the unwilling accomplice, to follow an arbitrary virtue, set up by the régime, without ever questioning its validity.

The second of Camus' central chapters, "The Historical Revolt", follows the course of modern revolutions, with the intention of showing that, like the Nazi bastardisation of Nietzschism, all modern revolutions have betrayed their origins and ended in "a reinforcement of the State. 1780 leads to Napoleon, 1848 to Napoleon III, 1917 to Stalin, the Italian troubles of the twenties to Mussolini, the Weimar Republic to Hitler."(221)

No revolution has ever been at a loss to find philosophic justification for itself. In most instances the philosophers concerned were men of complete sincerity, obsessed by Divine or social injustice, and motivated by high principles, but their thinking was deformed by those who adapted it. Belief in a terrestial City of Man is in itself noble, but can lead to cynicism and nihilism when, as Nechaiev declared, one confounds or equates politics and religion. If religion *is* politics, then the revolution becomes the unique value and violence is put at the service of the community. In principle, that violence is reserved for the enemy, that is, for the oppressors, but since the revolution is the only value, it demands the individual's total submission, even his betrayal of a friend. Under such conditions, friendship can only be a secondary, efficacious relationship.

Nechaiev, the most outspoken of the nihilistic philosophers, was not afraid to give expression to that principle:"The revolutionary," he says, "is a man condemned from the start. He must have neither sentimental attachments nor cling to any objects or beings. He must rid himself even of his name. Everything in him must center around one single passion, the revolution."(199) Thus, in the final analysis, the feeling of solidarity that a revolt can create dissolves beneath the pressure of efficacy. "Those who in any period of history have died for justice," says Camus, "have called themselves brothers."(202) But when violence is turned against all to the service of an abstract idea, the term "comrade" or "brother" becomes meaningless and the reign of cynicism is absolute. With Nechaiev that cynicism is pushed to its utter limits. Not only complete submission, but also utter disregard for those he is pretending to save, is an indispensable characteristic in the revolutionary. Efficacy is the only rule: if the future possibility of taking two steps forward necessitates, for the present, retreating one step, then the retreat must be made without question. "As for the oppressed, since it is a question of saving them, once and for all, the revolutionary leaders are for the time being justified in oppressing them even more."(203) Nechaiev went so far as to advocate that the revolution should, however contradictory it might seem, encourage the existing government to take repressive measures. It should likewise abstain from attacking "those among the oppressors who are most hated by the population", and to do its utmost "to increase the suffering and misery of the masses."(204) And to the question, "what right do we have to employ such tactics ?" Nechaiev would reply: "it is not a question of right, but of our duty to eliminate anything that is prejudicial to the cause."(204) Even Bakunin, whose revolutionary views were extreme enough, was appalled by Nechaiev's unbridled cynicism. "Little by little," writes Bakunin, "he (Nechaiev) has succeeded in convincing himself that in order to found an indestructible society, one must take Machiavelli's politics as a base and adopt the system of the Jesuits: violence for the body, lies for the soul."(204)

What Camus is here preparing to call for in the contemporary world is a renewed effort to be critical, especially of "efficacy": he deplores the tendency to replace thought with action, to replace responsibility with contempt. For Hitler, *to be* meant *to do*. "Men of action, when they are without faith, have never believed in any movement other than that of action."(223) Camus identifies fascism with "contempt", and concludes that, inversely, "any form of contempt, if it intervenes in politics, prepares for or installs fascism."(225) The individual's submission to an arbitrary value, whether under the banner of revolution or not, prepares for the destruction of responsibility as a meaningful idea. Under such conditions, responsibility is equivalent to blind obedience. A German concentration camp commander can cry, "I simply carried out my orders," since all responsibility, and therefore all blame, lies solely with the Führer, not with the links in his chain of command. And if, by chance, the Führer disappears, then so does the source of the responsibility. "When everyone is militarised, the only crime is not to kill when the order demands it."(228) The Führer and his party are an immense machine: those with him are the gears and the cogs which make it run; those against it are the material it consumes.

While Camus is careful to make a clear distinction between fascism and communism, the distinction is rather one of scope than of essence or even of method. Fascism, he maintains, was really a provincial doctrine which got out of hand and exceeded its own limits, while Russian communism aims at world unity. Hitler, astonished by his own successes, was diverted from the provincial aspects of his conquest, but the vague dream of an Empire of Germans has nothing to do with the Universal City. Russia, on the other hand, admits she is working for the Universal City. Fascism is superficial, and despite appearances, futureless. "Communism, on the contrary, is deep, meditated, patient. Therein lies its strength and importance in contemporary history."(232)

But whatever the visible trappings of the revolution, Camus denies categorically that there is any progression from revolt to revolution or that revolt is nothing, as the existentialists claim, if it is not revolutionary. "The revolutionary is at the same time *l'homme revolté*," he says, "or else he is no longer a revolutionary, but a policeman or a functionary who has turned against revolt. But if he is in revolt, he is by definition against the revolution; and thus there is no progress from one to the other, but only simultaneity and ever-increasing contradiction. Every revolutionary ends either as an oppressor or as an heretic.(306)

Despite the fact that he sees the rôle of *l'homme revolté* as that of a mediator between the Yogi and the Commissar, Camus finds himself face to face with a constantly growing array of dilemmas: oppression or heresy, inefficacious solidarity or efficacious isolation, abstention or *engagement*, history or metaphysics. His way out ? A reaffirmation couched in an excessively lyrical tone, of man's necessity to recognise his limits and to refuse the temptation to think or act in terms of absolutes. "If man by himself were capable of introducing unity into the world, if, by his decree alone, he could institute the reign of sincerity, innocence and justice, he would be God... the idea of revolt would henceforth be meaningless. If there is revolt, then lying, injustice and violence form, in part, the condition of *l'homme revolté*. Therefore, without renouncing his revolt and accepting murder and injustice, once and for all, he cannot pretend that he will neither kill nor lie. But neither can he consent to kill or lie since that would be to legitimatise murder and violence, and would destroy the reason for his insurrection. So it is that *l'homme revolté* can find no peace... (and) if he cannot always refrain from killing, directly or indirectly, he can at least make use of his restlessness and passion to diminish the chance of murder around him. Plunged into darkness, his unique virtue will be his refusal to surrender to the obscure vertigo; chained to evil, to drag himself obstinately towards good. If he kills, in the end, then he will accept death himself. Faithful to his origins, *l'homme revolté* demonstrates by sacrifice that his true freedom is not with regard to murder, but with regard to his own death."(352-3)

The "Organisation of Combat" group in Russia, founded in 1903, for which Camus has always felt a strong attachment, can, he says, furnish us with a concrete example and with "the only rule of conduct which is original today: learn how to live and die, and, in order to be man, refuse to be God."(377) It is the call for man to search out and exploit fully the affirmative element inherent in his revolt, the "yes" implied by the "no" which the nihilists have isolated and made use of. "The logic of *l'homme revolté* is to serve justice in order not to add to the existing injustices of the human condition, to strive towards lucidity of language in order not to thicken the universal lie, and, faced with the misery of mankind, to gamble upon happiness."(352)

Thus the conclusions clearly visible at the outset have been drawn: since government and revolution are incompatible, there have as yet never been any real revolutions in history. There can be only one, the final, all embracing revolution which will be accompanied by the withering away of government. "Any movement which pretends to be revolutionary, including and especially that which pretends to be materialist, is in reality only an inordinate metaphysical crusade."(138) And since revolution is a travesty of the original term, *l'homme revolté* maintains himself aloof from it. His revolt is personal, doubtless ineffective, but at least faithful to itself. By refraining from making himself an accomplice to the murder of reason, he may none the less be forced to kill, and in turn to pay for that crime with his own life. But even so, that death will be the death of a human being, and not that of a being reduced to the state of object. And, suggests Camus, should enough men of goodwill adopt such an attitude, perhaps there may yet emerge from the chaos of contemporary history a new ideal, founded on moderation and life, to combat the reigning forces of immoderation and death.

III

It is fairly easy to understand both why Camus wrote *L'Homme revolté*, and why the book was attacked by *Les Temps Modernes*. The questions Camus raises *are* fundamental, the problems it proposes to discuss *are* vital. But the conclusions drawn and the answers proferred are often confused.

Jeanson first of all chides Camus for having written too well, too perfectly. "To be sure, Camus never stops... protesting. But that protest is too beautiful, too sovereign, too sure of itself..." Jeanson also reproaches Camus for maintaining that all historical revolutions are nothing more than a perverted form of revolt. In his study of "The Historical Revolt", Camus, limiting himself to a metaphysical approach, declares that the historical and economic approaches to the problem have already been sufficiently explored. Jeanson feels that Camus has gone too far, "to the point of denying any rôle whatsoever to events or economics in the genesis of revolutions." Jeanson also finds that in spite of the book's denunciations of bourgeois hypocrisy, Camus ends by pleading, indirectly at least, the case of the *status quo*, and that by his persistent refusal to be an accomplice to any revolutionary movement he inevitably if unconsciously allies himself with the forces of reaction. "It is especially when a person is not at grips with any great injustice himself, " he writes, "that he can be wary of combatting it, for fear of provoking an even graver injustice."

Camus replies to the initial accusation—that *L'Homme revolté* is too well written—by asking ironically if a classical style necessarily implies reaction and jargon leftist tendencies. But that the book is well written, which is incontestable, is irrelevant. It is the tone and not the style which is disconcerting, as Sartre was quick to note. And if that is true of the book, it is a thousand times more true of the letter. The book is often aloof and proud in tone; the letter is mordant, ironic, exasperated. Camus is wounded and angry, and his use of expressions such as "I shall one day reply to that indecency," "But what good are texts ! Your collaborator is not concerned with them...," "I pardon your collaborator whole-heartedly for these innocent extravagances...," do him little honour. Especially pompous is his insistent refusal to address Jeanson by name, or ever to refer to him, via Sartre, as anything but "your collaborator".

Sartre did not miss the occasion to remark on the near-arrogance of tone and attitude in the letter. "You call me *Monsieur le Directeur des Temps Modernes*," he writes, "when everyone knows that we've been friends for ten years... You address your letter to me when your avowed intention is to refute Jeanson... What are you trying to do, transform your critic into an object, into a deadman ? You speak of him as one speaks of a soupbowl or a mandolin... But tell me, Camus, who are you to be so distant, who gives you the right to affect such superiority over Jeanson... ?" These questions of tone and style are important in so far as they are a symptom of Camus' attitude, but the crux of the matter is elsewhere.

Camus discerns two particular points of embarrassment in the Jeanson article; in his eyes they render its value doubtful. The first of these is a refusal to enter into a discussion of the Marxian and Hegelian philosophies. "Is there or is there not a Marxist prophecy ?" he asks, "and is it or is it not contradicted today by numerous facts ? Does or does not the *Phenomenology of Mind* authorise a theory of political cynicism ?" etc., etc. Camus concludes that Jeanson's article represents an indirect attempt to condemn as reactionary, "even in my case", any criticism of Marxism; it also equates the critical intelligence with reaction, and either refuses to discuss, or treats with disdain, any revolutionary tradition which is non-Marxian.

Sartre and Jeanson join forces in their reply to attack Camus where he is most vulnerable, in his general conception of and attitude towards history. "My book does not *deny* history," Camus wrote, "it merely criticises any attitude which aims at making history an absolute." Jeanson replies by saying that he never suggested that *L'Homme revolté* denied history. "I said that your conception of history, as when for instance you rewrote the story of the revolutions, was tantamount to suppressing history as such, in order that you might substitute for it a kind of metaphysical conflict between the revolt against the human condition and and the 'revolutionary' temptation to deify man; that you were in history, precisely, when you undertook to disengage yourself from it; that your protest against history was in reality directed against *its practical urgencies;* and that the attitude you sanctioned consists in *maintaining history*, that is, maintaining one's position *before* it, but forbearing to undertake anything *in* it." Why such an attitude ? and why does your protest sound so sovereign and distant ? Jeanson asks rhetorically. Because metaphysics interests you more than history, because *the problem of God is of more concern to you than the problem of man.* No doubt one of your virtues is an exceptional desire for justice, "but it is God that arouses it, against God it is directed, and He alone seems the worthy antagonist in the conflict wherein man's honour is opposed to that metaphysical wrong with which you imagine him inflicted."

"You look at history defiantly," Sartre adds, "Like the little girl who sticks her toe into the water and asks, 'is it warm ?', you stick your finger into history, then pull it out right away and ask, 'has it any sense ?'... If I thought that history were a swimming pool full of slime and blood I imagine I'd do the same as you; I'd think twice before diving in. But suppose that I'm already in it: suppose that from my point of view your very sulkiness is itself the proof of your historicity ? Suppose that I answer you like Marx: 'History *does* nothing; it is man—real living man—who does everything; history is merely the activity of man pursuing his own ends." If that is true, whoever withdraws from history ceases to share the ends of his contemporaries, and will be susceptible only to the absurdity of human agitations. But if he declaims against those agitations, he re-enters, in spite of himself, the historical cycle; because, without wanting to, he will furnish whichever of the two camps is on the ideological defensive with arguments liable to discourage the other... You ask whether or not history has a meaning or an end. For me it is the question which is meaningless. History, separated from the men who make it, is only an abstract, stationary concept... And the problem is not to *know* its end but to *give* it one."

Camus' second point of contention is the question of concentration camps in Soviet Russia, which represent for him a concrete, living example of a revolution, or that which calls itself revolution, reduced by political cynicism to brute authoritarianism. In his criticism Jeanson had said that, to our incorrigibly bourgeois eyes, it is perhaps not very difficult to decide that, between Capitalism and Stalinism, the former is the lesser of two evils. But, he continues, it is conceivable that the coal miner, the native of Madagascar, the Tunisian, have a different optic from ours.

"It is no use contending," Camus replies, "that we should sweep first before our own doorstep: the Madagascan before the Kirghiz. That objection, sometimes valid, is not valid in the present instance. You have the relative right to ignore the concentrationary fact in Russia as long as you don't bring up the questions raised by revolutionary ideology in general, by Marxism in particular. You lose that right if you do bring them up. And you must bring them up in discussing my book."

Sartre replies that if Jeanson failed to discuss the problem, it was certainly not because he was "embarrassed by it". The attitude of *Les Temps Modernes* on this particular point was made clear a long time ago, at approximately the same time at which David Rousset* made his findings public. As a matter of fact, the series of articles was composed *before* Rousset's *exposé*, although the issue in which they appeared was not published until several days afterwards. A few months later, that position was re-affirmed *in an editorial.* "The existence of these camps can arouse our indignation, horrify us even, but why in the world should it *embarrass* us ? Have I ever flinched when it was a question of saying what I thought about the Communist attitude ? And if I am such a subversive character, a shameful fellow-traveller, why do the Communists hate *me* so and not you ?

"Yes, Camus, like you I find these camps inadmissable; but just as inadmissable is the use that the so-called 'bourgeois press' makes of them every day. I don't say the Madagascan before the Turkman; I say that it is impossible to exploit the sufferings with which the Turkman is inflicted to justify those we force the Madagascan to submit to. I have seen the antiCommunists rejoice at the existence of these prisons, I have seen them make use of them in order to ease their own conscience. And I did not get the impression that they were doing anything to *help* the Turkman, but were exploiting his plight as Russia exploits his labour... Please, Camus, tell me seriously, what feeling could the "revelations" of Rousset awaken in the heart of an antiCommunist ? Despair ? Distress ? The shame of being a man ? Come, come now ! It is difficult for a Frenchman to put himself in the place of a Turkman, to feel any sympathy for so abstract a being... And because of that very lack of any relationship to the Turkman, what provoked indignation, and perhaps despair, was the idea that a socialist government, backed by an army of functionaries, could have systematically reduced men to servitude. And *that*, Camus, can in no way affect the antiCommunist, *who already believes the U.S.S.R. capable of anything*. The only feeling that the information aroused—this is painful for me to say—was *joy*. Joy, because it at last gave the anti-Communist his proof... It was not a question of influencing the workers —the antiCommunist is not crazy—but of influencing all honest people who were still 'leftist'; it was necessary to intimidate them, to strike terror in their hearts. If anyone opened his mouth to speak against extortion, they shut it for him immediately: 'And the camps ?' They warned people that they had better denounce the camps if they did not wish to be incriminated as accomplices. An excellent method: either the poor fellow turns his back on the Communists or they make of him an accomplice to 'the greatest crime on earth.' It was about at this point that I began to find these blackmailers abject. Because, as far as I can see, the scandal of these camps involved all of us... The iron curtain is only a mirror, and each half of the world reflects the other half. Each turn of the nut *here* corresponds to a turn of the bolt *over there*.

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* Author of "The Days of our Death" and instigator of enquiries concerning the real or supposed existence of concentration camps in Russia.

"Don't misunderstand me, Camus: I know that you've denounced a hundred times, and combatted in whatever way you could, the tyranny of Franco or the colonial policy of our government. You've acquired the 'relative right' to speak of the Soviet concentration camps. But I am sorry that you produce your knock-down argument to justify a quietism which fails to distinguish between the masters. Because it is all the same—you say it yourself—to confuse the masters and to confuse the slaves. But if you don't distinguish the latter you admit to not having any more than a sympathy of principle for them. Especially since it often comes to pass that the 'slave' is allied to one of those you call masters. That explains the embarrassment which the war in Indo-China has caused you. If we were to apply your principles to that particular case, the Vietminhs are colonised, therefore slaves, but they are also Communists, therefore tyrants. You censure the European proletariat because it has not publicly expressed disapproval of the Soviets, but you also blame the governments of Europe for admitting Spain to UNESCO. This being the case, I can see only one solution for you: the Galapagos Islands.

"But, on the contrary, it seems to me that the only way of helping the slaves over there, is by taking the side of those here."

IV

It is inevitably with a feeling of personal regret that one sees two men whose courage and intelligence one has long admired yield to the temptation of polemic and then separate unreconciled. As long as discussion is possible, friendship is possible. But when discussion deteriorates into a double monologue, the possibility for the give and take which friendship implies has disappeared. Even though the final exchange of letters between

Camus and Sartre did not quite reach the stage of the double monologue, it was not far short of it, and one finishes their letters with the dismaying impression that, for the moment at least, neither one has anything further to say to the other. "If you want to write again," Sartre says at the close of his reply to Camus,"the magazine is at your disposal. But next time, I shall not answer." Camus has not accepted the invitation.

Is it possible to fix the blame for the rupture on any one of the two parties ? It would probably be more fair, and nearer the truth, to explain it by the historical conditions which first brought the men together and have now divided them. As individuals, Camus and Sartre have always been dissimilar. Camus has been more the pure voice, an influence; Sartre, the embodiment of, the quest for a doctrine which is nothing when unapplied, a force. The one thinks in terms of metaphysics, the other in terms of historical reality, the invading fact; one approaches man through ideas and passions, the other approaches ideas through man moved by passions and needs. Camus, while not denying the moment of the historical event, regards it as something *into* which he is forced, as something which may perhaps be better understood from the distance which safeguards the critical intelligence. In his *Lettres à un Ami Allemand*, he accuses the Germans of having torn him away from his struggle against heaven, and of having obliged him to take part in the temporal and banal struggles of mankind. Sartre, on the other hand, regards history as something from which it is impossible to escape; man's existence is defined by what surrounds him.

The causes of the rupture are thus inherent in their respective personalities, and the rupture itself, always latent, needed only the catalytic situation capable of precipitating it. The situation which first brought them to share a room was the German occupation; at that moment accident surrounded them by the same wall: the choice was obvious. At that time, Sartre remarks, "you(Camus), as the editor of the clandestine newspaper *Combat*, and the author of so doggedly honest a character as Meursault, were just about exemplary."

But when the imposing fact of the German occupation was removed the common evil against which Sartre and Camus had fought was replaced by one more elusive and dispersed; before the new fact each struck his own pose. According to Sartre, Camus has simply failed to adapt himself to and to face squarely the new situation; according to Camus, Sartre has, consciously or unconsciously, closed his eyes to certain aspects of the eternal as well as the contemporary situation, apparently preferring dogmatism to the critical attitude.

Undoubtedly both men are sincere. There are certain elements of truth in both their arguments. Indeed, practically all of the contemporary truth makes its appearance in one form or another in their bitter contest; that, in a word, is its significance.

—Richard Seaver

REVIEWS

The Anathemata: *by David Jones, Faber and Faber, priced at* 25*s.*

The Anathemata is a piece of writing ("is it prose or verse ?" is the question asked on the inside of the dust-cover) written by "a wholly unclassifiable author" (Cf. the dust-cover).

It is about two hundred and thirty pages long, which pages contain what I should like to call the *matter* (Mr. Jones' creation), a preface (Mr. Jones' *apologia*) and (in type of painfully small pointage) a glossary, which, we are told in the preface, *glosses*. There are also ten illustrations, if one includes the dust-jacket (or cover). I think some of these illustrations were executed by Mr. Jones before the completion of this piece of writing, and some were executed by M. Jones after the completion of this piece of writing. I shall say nothing about them (the illustrations) beyond this: I do not like to see capitals and lowercase letters in such an arbitrary admixture. I refer the reader who owns this book already to pages facing pages 49, 55, 77, 127, 219, and especially to page 240. And the dust-jacket (or cover).

In his preface Mr. Jones has given us:

(a) An idea of what his poem* is.

(b) Why he wrote this piece of writing.

(c) How he wrote it.

(d) When he wrote it.

(e) How it should be read.

(f) When it should be read.

(g) How certain words should be pronounced. In the context in this respect he makes (by inferences) certain references to the prosodies of poets (or writers), Gerard Manley Hopkins, St Thomas More and others.

It occurs also in the preface that Mr. Jones tells us that the Greek word *anathema* is spelt with an *epsilon*. On the dust-cover (or jacket) he has accented a capital Roman E. I do not quite follow what he is up to here, either typographically or ideogrammatically. I notice that *Messrs Faber and Faber* do not share his view in their setting up of *their* title pages.

Perhaps it is of no consequence.

I should also like to thank Ruth Winawer and Nest Cleverdon (?) for kindly typing his manuscript with such care and efficiency.

Of the "glosses", I like them. Because they are in this volume it goes on my reference-shelf (which I keep small). I had much difficulty in reading the *matter* (or poem) because I found myself so engrossed in the "glosses" that time and time again I had to "tear myself away" so to speak in order to give my undivided attention to what business was on hand: to wit, my expressive remarks-to-be regarding the *matter*, which, we find on reading the first lines of it, is, actually

an *other*
(We already and first of all discern him making this thing other. His groping syntax, if we attend, already shapes:)

and we must infer, was once a thing.

Already and first of all I find Mr. Jones' preface resolving itself into a pretty neat dovetail with the texts, or matter.

Especially: (Cf. the *preface*),

I lerne song, I can but smal grammere.

In the jargon from across the Herring Pond (Cf. the *preface*) I think this is rather sweet (or quaint). It is also rather revealing.

What would the reviewers in periodicals like the *New Statesman* and *The Times Literary Supplement* say about this poem (or piece of writing) if it were

(a) not accompanied by a preface, glosses, and illustrations ?

(b) not published by *Faber and Faber ?* Suppose it had appeared under the Richards imprint during the twenties and thirties ? Would Mr. Eliot have tolerated verse of this kind when he was working on *The Wasteland ?*

when might that be ?
when might that be ?
I do not know !
I do not know
I do not know what time is at
or whether before or after
was it when—
but when is when ?

I don't know either.

I should like to have a gander (Cf. the Herring Pond) at Mr. Jones the *poet* undressed (Cf. the story about the Emperor's New Clothes). I think Mr. Jones' shoulders are well padded.

He's some rare chinas
beyond the Pillars
He looks a bit of clencher-build
himself

—C. H.

---

* We must gather from this preface that the *matter* of this book should be regarded as a *poem.*

— LEFT BANK - ART CENTER —

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SPRING - SUMMER 1953

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Advisory Editor and Director
Richard Seaver
Alice Jane Lougee (Publisher), Limerick, Maine

to my exigent friends

If I say to you that the sun in the forest
Is like a belly surrendering in a bed
You believe me you sanction all my desires

If I tell you that the crystal of a rainy day
Tinkles continually in the indolence of love
You believe me you spin out the time for loving

If I say to you that on the branches of my bed
A bird has built his nest who never says yes
You believe me you share my anxiety

If I tell you that inserted in the hollow of a spring
Half-opening the greenness a river's key is turning
You believe me what is more you understand my words

But if straightforwardly I sing my entire street
And my entire country like an endless street
You cease to believe me you go away to the desert

For you walk without goal without knowing that men
Need to be united to hope to struggle
To explain the world and to transform it

At a single stride of my heart I will lead you on
I have no strength I have lived I am still living
But why should I seek to dazzle you with words

When all I really desire is to free you and to fuse you
As well with the sea-weed and the river-reed of dawn
As with your brothers engaged in building their light.

paul eluard

[Translated from the French by Christopher Hancock
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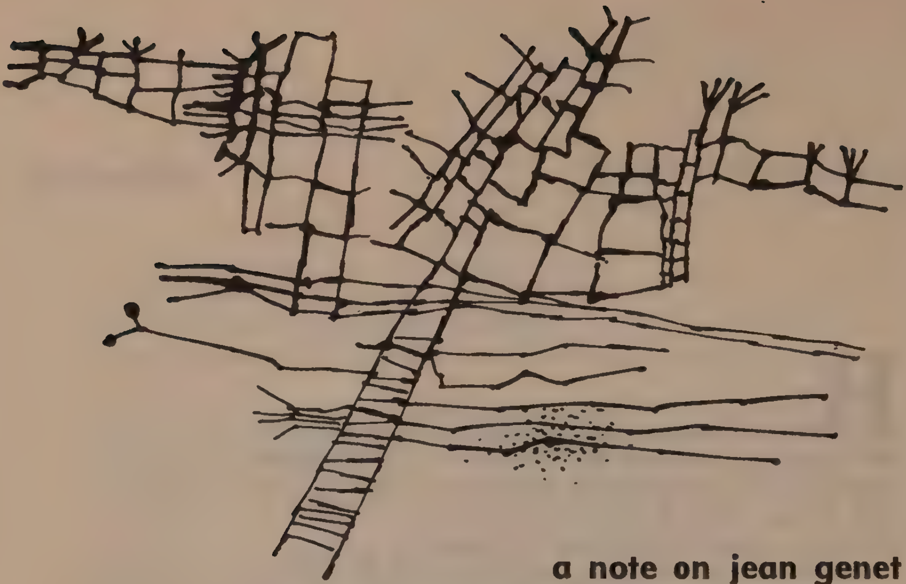
editorial

Because of the slight change in format of this (the fourth) number of MERLIN, and as subsequent numbers will preserve the dimensions of the present one, it has been decided to number it : *Volume* 2, *Number* 1, instead of *Volume* 1, *Number* 4.

MERLIN is an expatriot magazine. While we wish to translate and to publish foreign writing, it was part of our original intention to be a clearing house for that Anglo-American writing which for one reason or another and in one sense or another is expatriot. That term must be understood broadly; so understood, the tradition of that writing is an important one. It did not, as popular journalism sometimes implies, begin and end with Scott Fitzgerald. It is as old as Xenephon. The cock-sparrow provincialism of temperament implicit in many of the contributions to the recent symposium in the *Partisan Review*—Norman Mailer's was an honourable exception— was a disquieting symptom of a national culture neither old nor young enough to be quite honest with itself.

Expatriot writing is not necessarily wild, indeed, it has often been more classical than the home product. Nevertheless, the rebel is often a very young man, and if he cannot get published at home he is naturally enough tempted to identify himself with the professional abroad; but the truth is that his so-called "experimentation" is often a mask for his incompetence. Experimental writing—it is an imprecise term—is not an easy way out for a man who has nothing to say. It is questionable whether further experimentation has any meaning in the present-day context. Consolidation is necessary. The great experimenters of the first half of the century are by no means generally accepted, far less digested; that being so, it is not only a question of whether it is advisable to "proceed farther" but of whether it is possible. The word " originality" is a dangerous one; it is often the instrument of a fool's own suicide. Below the level of competent writing no one is going to look for originality.



a note on jean genet

NOT all who would be are Narcissus. Many who lean over the water see in it only a vague human figure. Genet sees himself everywhere; the dullest surfaces reflect his image; even in others he perceives himself, thereby bringing to light their deepest secrets. The disturbing theme of the double, the image, the counterpart, the enemy brother, is found in all his works.

Each of them has the strange property of being both itself and the reflection of itself. Genet brings before us a dense and teeming throng which intrigues us, transports us and changes into Genet beneath Genet's gaze. Hitler appears, talks, lives; he removes his mask: it was Genet. But the little servant-girl with the swollen feet who meanwhile was burying her child—that was Genet too. In *The Thief's Journal* the myth of the double has assumed its most reassuring, most common, most *natural* form. Here Genet speaks of Genet without intermediary; he talks of his life, of his wretchedness and glory, of his loves; he tells the story of his thoughts. One might think that, like Montaigne, he is going to draw a good-humored and familiar self-portrait. But Genet is never familiar, even with himself. He does, to be sure, tell us everything. The whole truth, nothing but the truth, but it is the sacred truth. He opens up one of his myths; he tells us, "You're going to see what stuff it's made of, " and we find another myth. He reassures us only to disturb us further. His autobiography *is not* an autobiography; it merely seems like one; it is a sacred cosmogony. His stories *are not* stories; they excite you and fascinate you. But you thought he was relating *facts* and suddenly you realize he is describing rites. If he talks of the wretched beggars of the Barrio Chino, it is only to debate, in lordly style, questions of precedence and etiquette; he is the Saint-Simon of this Court of Miracles. His memories *are not* memories; they are exact but sacred; he speaks about his life like an evangelist, as a wonder-struck witness. When Edouard, the novelist in Gide's *The Counterfeiters*, writes the journal of his novel, he is no longer fictitious. But Genet the novelist, speaking of Genet the thief, is more of a thief than the thief; the thief and his double are alike sacred. Thus, there comes into being that new object: a mythology of the myth (like the blues song that was called *The Birth of the Blues*); behind the first-degree myths—The Thief, Murder, the Beggar, the Homosexual—one discovers the reflective myths; the Poet, the Saint, the Double, Art. Nothing but myths, then; a Genet with a Genet stuffing, like the prunes of Tours. If, however, you are able to see at the seam the thin line separating the enveloping myth from the enveloped myth, you will discover the truth, which is terrifying. That is why I do not fear to call this book, the most beautiful that Genet has written, the *Dichtung und Wahrheit* of homosexuality.

jean-paul sartre

journal du voleur *(extracts)*

Thus, by means of a very crude subterfuge here I am again talking about beggars and their sorrows. Behind a real or sham physical ailment which draws attention to itself and is thereby forgotten is hidden a more secret malady of the soul. I shall list the secret wounds:

decayed teeth,
foul breath,
a hand cut off,
smelly feet,
a gouged eye,
a peg-leg, etc.

We are fallen during the time that we bear the marks of the fall, and to watch within us the knowledge of the imposture is of little avail. Using only the pride imposed by our poverty, we provoked pity by cultivating the most repulsive wounds. We became a reproach to your happiness.

Meanwhile Stilitano and I lived miserably. When, thanks to a few fairies, I had brought in a little money, he showed such pride that I have sometimes wondered whether in my memory he is not great because of the bragging of which I was the pretext and chief confidant. The quality of my love required of him that he prove his virility. If he was the splendid beast gleaming in the darkness of his ferocity, let him devote himself to a sport worthy of it. I incited him to theft.

We decided to rob a store together. In order to cut the telephone wire which, most imprudently, was near the door, a pair of pliers was needed. We entered one of the numerous Barcelona bazaars where there were hardware departments.

"Manage not to move if you see me swiping something."

"What'll I do?"

"Nothing. Just look."

Stilitano was wearing white sneakers. He was dressed in his blue pants and a khaki shirt. At first I noticed nothing, but when we left I was amazed to see, at the flap of his shirt pocket, a kind of small lizard, both restless and quiet, hanging by the teeth. It was the steel pliers that we needed and that Stilitano had just stolen.

"That he charms monkeys, men and women," I said to myself "is comprehensible, but what can be the nature of the magnetism which comes from his glib muscles and his curls, from that blond amber, that can enthral objects?"

However, there was no question about it: objects were obedient to him. Which amounts to saying that he understood them. So well did he know the nature of steel, and the nature of this particular fragment of polished steel that is called pliers, that it remained, to the point of fatigue, docile, loving, clinging to his shirt to which he had known with precision how to hook it, biting desperately, so as not to fall, into the cloth with its thin jaws. It would sometimes happen, however, that these objects, which are irritated by a clumsy movement, would hurt him. Stilitano used to cut himself, his fingertips were finely gashed, his nail was black and crushed, but this merely heightened his beauty. (The purple of sunsets, according to physicists, is the result of a greater thickness of air which is crossed only by short waves. At midday when nothing is happening in the sky, an apparition of this kind would trouble us less; the wonder is that it occurs in the evening, when the sun *sets*, when it disappears to pursue a mysterious destiny, when perhaps it dies. In order to fill the sky with such pomp, a certain physical phenomenon is possible only at the moment that most exalts the imagination; at the setting of the most brilliant of the heavenly bodies.) Ordinary objects, those used every day, will adorn Stilitano. His very acts of cowardice melt my rigor. I liked his taste for laziness. He was leaky, as one says of a vessel. When we had the pliers, he made as if to leave.

"There may be a dog around."

We thought of putting it out of the way with a piece of poisoned meat.

"Rich people's dogs don't eat just any old thing."

Suddenly Stilitano thought of the legendary trick of the gypsies: the thief, so they say, wears a pair of pants smeared with lion's fat. Stilitano knew that this was unobtainable, but the idea excited him. He stopped speaking. He was probably imagining himself in a thicket, at night, stalking his prey, wearing a pair of pants stiff with fat. He was strong with the lion's strength, wild with readiness for war, the stake, the pit and the grave. In his armor of grease and imagination he was resplendent. I do not know whether he was aware of the beauty of adorning himself with the strength and the boldness of a gypsy, nor whether he delighted in the idea of thus penetrating the secrets of the tribe.

"Would you like being a gypsy?" I once asked him.

"Me?"

"Yes."

"I wouldn't mind it. Only I wouldn't want to stay in a caravan."

Thus, he did dream sometimes. I thought I had discovered the flaw in his petrified shell through which a bit of my tenderness might slip in. Stilitano was too little excited by nocturnal adventures for me to feel any real intoxication in his company when we slunk along walls, lanes and gardens, when we scaled fences, when we robbed. I have no substantial memory of any such excitement. It was with Guy, in France, that I was to have the profound revelation of what burglary was.

(When we were locked into the little lumber-room waiting for night and the moment to enter the empty offices of the Municipal Pawnshop in B., Guy suddenly seemed to me inscrutable, secret. He was no longer the ordinary chap you come across somewhere or other; he was a kind of destroying angel. He tried to smile, he even broke out into a silent laugh, but his eyebrows were knitted together. From within this little fairy where a hoodlum was locked, there sprang forth a determined and terrifying fellow, ready for anything, and for murder first, if anyone made so bold as to hinder his action. He was laughing, and in his eyes I thought I could read a will to murder which might be practised on me. The more he stared at me, the more I had the feeling that he read in me the same determined will to be used against him. What if someone had entered at such a moment, uncertain as we were of one another—so it seemed to me—each half dead with fear that one of us might resist the other's terrible decision?)

I continued doing other jobs with Stilitano. We knew a night-watchman who tipped us off. Thanks to him, we lived off our burglaries for a long time. The boldness of a thief's life—and its light—would have meant nothing if Stilitano at my side had not been proof of it. My life became magnificent by men's standards since I had a friend whose beauty derived from the idea of luxury. I was the valet whose job was to take care of, to dust, to polish, and wax, an object of great value which, however, through the miracle of friendship, belonged to me.

"When I walk along the street," I wondered, "am I being envied by the wealthiest and loveliest senorita?" What mischievous prince, what ragged infanta can walk about and have so fair a lover?"

I speak of this period with emotion, and I magnify it, but if glamorous words, I mean words charged in my mind with glamor more than with meaning, occur to me, it is perhaps because the wretchedness they express, which was mine too, is also a source of wonder. I want to rehabilitate this period by writing of it with the names of things most noble. My victory is verbal and I owe it to the richness of the terms, but may the wretchedness that counsels such choices be blessed. In Stilitano's company, during the period when I had to live it, I stopped desiring moral abjection and I hated that which must be its sign: my lice, my rags and my filth. Perhaps his power alone was enough for Stilitano to inspire respect without having to perform a bold deed; nevertheless, I would have liked to live with him more brilliantly, though it was sweet for me to encounter his shadow (his shadow, dark as a negro's must be, was my *seraglio*), the looks of admiration of the whores and their men when I knew that we were both poor thieves. I kept inciting him to ever more perilous adventures.

"We need a revolver," I said to him.

"Would you know what to do with it?"

"With you around I wouldn't be scared to bump a guy off."

Since I was his right arm, I would have been the one to execute. But the more I obeyed serious orders, the greater was my intimacy with him who issued them. He, however, smiled. In a gang (an association of evil-doers) the young boys and inverts are the ones who show boldness. They are the instigators of dangerous jobs. They play the role of the fecundating sting. The potency of the males, the age, authority and presence of the elders, fortify and reassure them. The males are dependent only upon themselves. They are their own heaven, and, knowing their weakness, they hesitate. Applied to my particular case, it seemed to me that the men, the tough guys, were made of a kind of feminine fog in which I would still like to lose myself so that I might feel more intensely that I was a solid block.

A certain distinction of manners, a more assured step, proved to me my success, my ascension in the secular domain. In Stilitano's presence, I walked in the wake of a duke. I was his faithful but jealous dog. My bearing was proud. Along the Ramblas, towards evening, we passed a woman and her son. The boy was goodlooking. He was about fifteen years old. My eye lingered on his blond hair. We walked by them and I turned round. It was at that moment that the mother, when both Stilitano's eye and mine were staring after her son, drew him to her, or drew herself to him, as if to protect him from the danger of our two gazes, of which, however, she was unaware. I was jealous of Stilitano whose mere movement of the head had, so it seemed to me, just been perceived as a danger by the mother's back.

One day while I was waiting in a bar on the Parallelo (the bar was at the time, the meeting-place of all the hardened French criminals: pimps, crooks, racketeers, escaped convicts. Argot, sung with somewhat of a Marseilles accent, and a few years behind Montmartre argot, was its official tongue. Twenty-one and poker were played there rather than ronda.) Stilitabo blew in. He was welcomed by the Parisian pimps with their customary, slightly ceremonious politeness. Severely, but with smiling eyes, he solemnly placed his solemn behind on the straw-bottomed chair whose wood groaned with the shamelessness of a beast of burden. This wailing of the seat expressed perfectly my respect for the sober posterior of Stilitano whose charm was neither all nor always contained there, but there, in that spot—or rather on it—would assemble, accumulate and depute its most caressing waves—and masses of lead!—to give the rump a reverberating undulation and weight.

I refuse to be a prisoner of verbal automatism, but this time I must have recourse to a religious image: this posterior was a Station. Stilitano sat down. Still with his elegant lassitude"I palmed them," he would say on each and every occasion—he dealt the cards for the poker game, from which I was excluded. None of these gentlemen would have required me to leave the game, but of my own accord, out of courtesy, I went to sit down behind Stilitano. As I was about to take my seat, I saw a louse on the collar of Stilitano's jacket. Stilitano was handsome and strong, and welcome at a gathering of similar males whose authority likewise lay in their muscles and their awareness of their revolvers. The louse on Stilitano's collar, still invisible to the other men, was not a small stray spot; it was moving, it shifted about with disturbing velocity, as if crossing and measuring its domain—its space rather. But it was not only at home; on Stilitano's collar it was the sign that he belonged most definitely to a verminous world, despite the *eau de Cologne* and the silk shirt. I examined him with closer attention: his hair near the neck was too long, dirty and irregularly cut.

"If the louse continues, it's going to fall onto his sleeve or into his glass. The pimps'll see it..."

As if out of tenderness, I leaned on Stilitano's shoulder and gradually worked my hand up to his collar, but I was unable to complete my movement; with a shrug, Stilitano disengaged himself and the insect continued its meanderings. It was a Pigalle pimp, tied up, so they said, with an international band of white-slavers, who made the following remark:

"There's a nice one climbing up you."

All eyes turned—with out, however, losing sight of the game—to the collar of Stilitano, who, twisting his neck, managed to see the insect.

"You're the one who's been picking them up," he said to me as he crushed it.

"Why me?"

"I'm telling you it's you."

The tone of his voice was unanswerably arrogant, but his eyes were smiling. The men continued their card game.

It was the same day that Stilitano informed me that Pépé had just been arrested. He was in the Montjuich jail.

"How did you know?"

"A newspaper."

"How long can they give him?"

"Life."

We made no other comment.

Those whom one of their number called the Carolinas paraded to the site of a demolished street urinal. During the 1933 riots, the insurgents tore out one of the dirtiest, but most beloved pissoirs. It was near the port and the barracks, and its iron had been corroded by the hot urine of thousands of soldiers. When its ultimate death was certified, the Carolinas—not all, but a solemnly chosen delegation—in shawls, mantillas, silk dresses and fitted jackets, went to the site to place a bunch of red roses tied together with a crêpe veil. The procession started from the Parallelo, crossed the Callo Sao Paolo and went down the Ramblas de los Flores until it reached the statue Columbus. The fairies were perhaps thirty in number, at eight o'clock, sunrise. I saw them going by. I accompanied them from a distance. I knew that my place in their midst, not because I was one of them, but because their shrill voices, their cries, their extravagant gestures had, it seemed to me, no other aim but to want to pierce the shell of the world's contempt. The Carolinas were great. They were the Daughters of Shame.

When they reached the port, they turned right, toward the barracks, and upon the rusty and stinking sheet-iron of the pissotière that lay battered on the heap of dead scrap-iron they placed the flowers.

I was not in the procession. I belonged to the ironic and indulgent crowd that was entertained by it. Pedro airily admitted to his false lashes, the Carolinas to their wild larks.

However, Stilitano, by denying himself to my pleasure, became the symbol of chastity, of frigidity itself. If he did screw the whores often, I was unaware of it. When he lay down to sleep in our bed, he had the modesty to arrange his shirt-tail so artfully that I saw nothing of his sex. The purity of his features corrected even the eroticism of his walk. He became representative of a glacier. I would have liked to offer myself to the most bestial of negroes, to the most flat-nosed and most powerful face, so that within me, having no room for anything but sexuality, my love for Stilitano might be further stylized. I could therefore venture in his presence the most absurd and humiliating postures.

We often went to the Criolla together. Hitherto, it had never occurred to him to exploit me. When I brought back to him the pesetas I had earned in the pissotières, Stilitano decided that I would work in the Criolla.

"Would you like me to dress up as a woman?" I murmured.

Would I have dared, supported by his powerful shoulder, to walk the streets in a spangled skirt between the Calle Carmen and the Calle Mediodia? Except for foreign sailors, no one would have been surprised, but neither Stilitano nor I would have known how to choose the dress or the coiffure, for taste is required. That was what probably held us back. I still remember the sighs of Pedro, with whom I was friendly, when he went to get dressed.

"When I see those old rags hanging there, I get the blues! I get the impression I'm going into a vestry and getting ready to conduct a funeral. They've got a priestish smell. Like incense. Like urine. Look at them hanging! I wonder how I manage to get into those damned bladders."

"Will I have to have things like that? Maybe I'll even have to sew and cut with my man's help. And wear a bow, or maybe several, in my hair."

With horror I saw myself decked out in enormous cabbage-bows, not of ribbons, but of rubber in phallic form.

" It'll be a drooping, dangling bow," added a mocking inner voice. An old man's droopy ding-dong. A bow limp, or impish! And in what hair? In an artificial wig or in my own dirty curly hair?

As for my dress, I knew that it would be sober and that I would wear it with modesty, whereas what was needed to carry the thing off was a kind of mad extravagance. Nevertheless, I cherished the dream of sewing on a cloth rose. It would emboss the dress and would be the feminine counterpart of Stilitano's bunch of grapes.

(Long afterward, when I met him again in Antwerp, I spoke to Stilitano about the fake bunch hidden in his fly. He then told me that a Spanish whore used to wear a muslin rose pinned on below the belt.

"To replace her lost flower." he said.)

In Pedro's room, I looked at the skirts with melancoly. He gave me a few addresses of women's outfitters, where I would find dresses to fit me.

"You'll have a *toilette*, Juan." *

I was sickened by this butcher's word (I thought that the toilette was also the greasy tissue enveloping the guts in animals' bellies). It was then that Stilitano perhaps hurt by the idea of his friend in fancy-dress, refused.

"There's no need for it,"he said. "You'll manage well enough to make pick-ups."

Atlas, the boss of the Criolla demanded that I appear as a young lady.

As a young lady!

"Myself a young lady
I alight on my hip..."

I then realized how hard it is to reach the light by puncturing the abscess of shame. I managed once to appear in woman's dress with Pedro, to exhibit myself with him. I went one evening, and we were invited by a group of French officers. At their table was a lady of about fifty. She smiled at me sweetly, with indulgence, and unable to contain herself any longer she asked me :

"Do you like men?"

"Yes, madame, I do."

"And...when did it start?"

I did not slap anyone, but my voice was so shaken that I realized how angry and ashamed I was. In order to pull myself together, that same night I robbed one of the officers.

"At least," I said to myself, "if my shame is real, it hides a sharper more dangerous element, a kind of sting that will always threaten anyone who provokes it. It might not have been laid over me like a trap, might not have been intentional, but since it is what it is, I want it to conceal me so that I can lie in wait beneath it."

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* Translator's note : The term *la toilette* also refers to certain kinds of wrappings or casings, for example, a tailor's or dressmaker's wrapper for garments, as well as to the caul over mutton.

At Carnival time, it was easy to go about in woman's dress, and I stole an Andalusian petticoat with a bodice from a hotel room. Disguised by the mantilla and fan, one evening I crossed the city quickly in order to get to the Criolla. So that my break with your world would be more brutal, I kept my pants on under the skirt. Hardly had I reached the bar than someone ripped the train of my dress. I turned around in a fury.

"I beg your pardon. Excuse me."

The foot of a blond young man had got caught in the lace. I hardly had strength enough to mumble, "Watch what you're doing." The face of the clumsy young man who was both smiling and excusing himself was so pale that I blushed. Someone next to me said to me in a low voice, "Excuse him, senora, he limps."

"I won't have people limping on my dresses!" screamed the tragedienne smouldering in me. But the people around us were laughing. "I won't have people limping on my toilette!" I screamed to myself. Formulated within me, in my stomach, as it seemed to me, or in the intestines, which are enveloped by the "toilette", this phrase must have been uttered with a terrible look. Furious and humiliated, I left under the laughter of the man and the Carolinas. I went straight to the sea and drowned the skirt, the bodice, the mantilla and the fan. The whole city was joyous, drunk with the Carnival cut from the earth and alone in the middle of the Ocean. I was poor and sad.

("Taste is required..." I was already refusing to have any. I forbade myself. Of course I would have shown a great deal. I knew that cultivating it would have—not sharpened me but—softened me. Stilitano himself was amazed that I was so uncouth. I wanted my fingers to be numb : *I kept myself from learning to sew.*)

Stilitano and I left for Cadiz. Changing from one freight train to another, we got to a place near San Fernando and decided to continue our journey on foot. Stilitano disappeared. He arranged to meet me at the station. He didn't show up. I waited for a long time ; I returned the following day and the day after, two days in succession, though I was sure that he had deserted me. I was alone and without money. When I realized this, I again became aware of the presence of lice, of their distressing and sweet company in the hems of my shirt and pants. Stilitano and I had never ceased to be nuns of the Upper Thebaid who never wash their feet and whose shifts rot away.

San Fernando is on the sea. I decided to get to Cadiz, which is built right in the water, though connected to the mainland by a very long jetty. It was evening when I started, before me were the high salt pyramids of the San Fernando marshes, and farther off, in the sea, silhouetted by the setting sun, a city of domes and minarets. At the outermost point of occidental soil I suddenly had before me the synthesis of the Orient. For the first time in my life I neglected a human being for a thing. I forgot Stilitano.

Unless there should occur an event of such gravity that my literary art, in the face of it, would be imbecilic and I would need a new language to master this new misery, this is my last book. I am waiting for heaven to fall across the corner of my face. Saintliness means turning pain to good account. It means forcing the devil to be God. It means obtaining the recognition of evil. For five years I have been writing books : I can say that I have done so with pleasure, but I have finished. Through writing I have got what I was seeking. What will guide me, as something learned, is not what I have lived but the tone in which I tell of it. Not the anecdotes but the work of art. Not my life but the interpretation of it. It is what language offers me to evoke it, to talk about it, render it. To achieve my legend. I know what I want. I know where I'm going. As for the chapters which follow (I have already said that a great number of them have been lost), I am delivering them in bulk.

(By legend I do not mean the more or less decorative notion which the public that knows my name will have of me, but rather the identity of my future life with the most audacious notion which I and others, after this account, may form of it. It remains to specify whether the fulfillment of my legend consists of the boldest possible existence of the criminal order.)

In the street—I am so afraid of being recognized by a policeman—I know how to withdraw into myself. Since my quintessence has taken refuge in the deepest and most secret retreat (a place in the depths of my body where I stay awake, or keep watch in the form of a tiny flame) I no longer fear anything. I am rash enough to think that my body is free of all distinguishing signs, that it looks empty, impossible to identify, since everything about me has quite abandoned my image, my gaze, my fingers, whose twitchings evaporate, and that the inspectors also see that what is walking beside them on the sidewalk is a mere shell, emptied of its man. But if I walk along a quiet street, the flame grows, spreads to my limbs, rises to my image and colors it with my likeness.

I accumulate rash acts : getting into stolen cars, walking in front of stores where I have operated, showing obviously fake papers. I have the feeling that in a very short time everything is bound to break wide open. My rash acts are quite serious and I know that airy-winged catastrophe will emerge from a very, very slight mistake. * But while I hope for misfortune as an act of grace, it is well for me to plunge fully

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* But what will prevent my destruction? Speaking of catastrophe, I can not help recalling a dream : a locomotive was pursuing me. I was running along the tracks. I heard the machine puffing at my heels. I left the rails to run into the countryside. The locomotive cruelly pursued me, but gently and politely it stopped in front of a small and fragile wooden gate which I recognized as one of the gates which closed a meadow belonging to my foster-parents and where, as a child, I used to lead the cows to pasture. In telling a friend about this dream, I said, "... the train stopped at the gate of my childhood... "

into the usual ways of the world. I want to fulfil myself in one of the rarest of destinies. I have only a dim notion of what it will be. I want it to have not a graceful curve, slightly bent toward evening, but a hitherto unseen beauty, lovely because of the danger which works away at it, overwhelms it, undermines it. Oh let me be only utter beauty! I shall go quickly or slowly, but I shall dare what must be dared. I shall destroy appearances, the casings will burn away and one evening I shall appear there in the palm of your hand, quiet and pure, like a glass statuette. You will see me. Round about me there will be nothing left.

By the gravity of the means and the splendor of the materials which he has used to draw near to men, I measure the degree to which the poet was remote from them. The depth of my abjection forced him to this convict's labour. But my abjection was my despair. And despair was strength itself—and at the same time the matter for putting an end to it. But if the work is of utmost beauty, demanding the vigour of the deepest despair, the poet had to love men to undertake such an effort. And he had to succeed. It is right for men to shun a profound work if it is the cry of a man monstrously engulfed within himself.

By the gravity of the means which I require to thrust you from me, measure the tenderness I bring you. Judge to what degree I love you by the barricades I erect in my life and work (since the work of art should be only the proof of my saintliness, not only must this saintliness be real so that it may fecundate the works but also that I may brace myself, on a work already strong with saintliness, for a greater effort toward an unknown destination) so that your breath—I am corruptible to an extreme—may not rot me. My tenderness is of fragile mould. And the breath of men would disturb the methods for seeking a new paradise. I shall impose a candid vision of evil, even though it be necessary, in this quest, that I leave behind my flesh, my honor and my glory.

(translated by Bernard Frechtman
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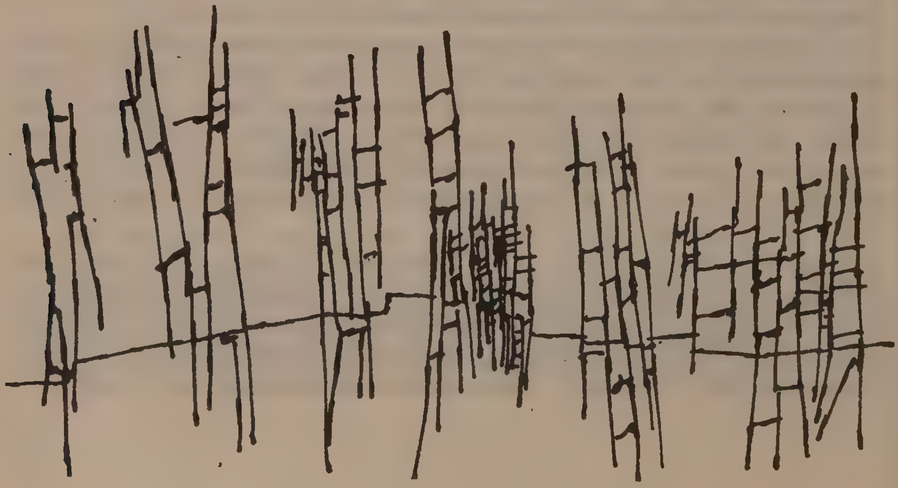
jean genet



wand and quadrant

(*Conclusion*)

III

Sea born, sea broken, sea acclaimed and mourned
in one tide's twist. Scapegoat for the wet desert
the red-wave churns your bone in the windwrestle.
Arc and antarctic eunuch got to buggery upon himself,
sour at the moon's leash; the phosphor tentacles
cloaked and scurf-furred; wind maimed and gull
crowned shoulders; the fantailed lapwing mutes
in the pummice hearth, the embers splayed by foam;
risen with the spark, the spindrift.

Water and bloodflow, and the moon's tyranny over
the redflow in me. I speak it out in a weathercock's
voice, but a deadman's fingers spigot my ears
to halt dumb incest among groins.

WITHIN the christmastide
twelve days I watched the ships
out oared and jury driven.

HEARD the rite, rung-forward
in the keelshead chapel, blonde
wooden-headed woman before all.

TO Avalon the carved girl stared
and to beyond Hesperides

and then beyond again the veins of ambergris, where
keelhauled serpents, ell's length, breathing camphor,
twined hoops about the world's flat core, and then

Beyond, she saw a twin horned unicorn
Perhaps, a reef and house of fame
To stool her lap, and muss the white

Beast's head. Though white and carved
The wise infatuate crew knew doom
Sloped in her grin, and that the oak

Had grain curled jewels hewn
Beyond the price of all. Chartriveted
At christmastide they went, and I,

And drowned with them and had some trove.

Right flanked, Odysseus; and to the left, Tristram
ashamed for Mark; I stand and Charon marks my ticket
with his thumb. One with Elpenor and his sweep put
straightly up; Tristram sea-robbed of breath, a golden
hair bones into nothingness. And the owl of Athene
stood in the gate of my heart, and bound me to the
transome with the rest.
Waiting till dawn.
Then dawn. And then, broken to silver, oars lift and
lower: the boat light-winged, birds almost quiet,
and the long all broken waves wane at our keel.
I see Hesperides and Avalon fade in the scarves of day.
The paper sea crossgartered by the wake of ships, made
a quick benediction, and womans' echo, their tongues
bound into each others voice, swallowed by windfields,
out echoed by new ghosts with shark's teeth in their bones.

'We were not slain
But raised. Raised
NOT to life,
but to be buried twice by
Men of strife.
What peace can the living have
WHEN the dead have none?
agree among you
Here we ten are one.'

Owl who stood at my heart's core, prepare to fly the
distance to my head with pips lodged in your talons;
to let fruit fall and a golden colour in my throat.

Out of the dark collected in your wings, keep fleas
of starlight, to bring you there in a calm reckoning.

Dawn moves. Day follows. High-noon defines the spire
bird, and lays his shadow inbetween my hands. Late sun
falls caisson to ocean-rim, and the night has twice
flown birds unseen upon their whistling wings.

Returning, returning, returning,
who will remember the end of the journey,
grief to inherit an empty landfall?

'I master' sang a boy on the moonraker;
'I am lean to remember the green hummock
and the scythe grass of Hispaniola:

and the chain-shot that maddened you,
and the x of gold that drove you mad.
I, skinny with fathoms, will be the memory

For the stone frigate and the broken crew'

'Sing not' sang one unsanguined by the brine;
'my cheekrags will not flare the necessary shame
that bloodsong brings into your tongue.

At Avalon the master is gone deaf
counting his own round gold at binnacle;
and the rotted lanyards of your throat

Will fray and fit his thick doubloons
heavy with king head'. The boy sang 'love you
lord, the striped lute and the ribbons broke

From me; and the sea was the vision of an old man.'

Nard,
Gristle,
And frankincense:
The spirecock,
Melts,
To be a phoenix:
Flame will embalm,
The prophet slag,
Remain,
To see its pyre raise,
The next voyage.

I am the spirebird,
Commonly the wind's servant;
Fear of the cuckoo's word,
And the South, South, flight,
Not in my iron chest.

A gimble through my loins,
Stakes their flight to earth;
I cry and fly with it,
But the machinery of bells
Drowns my clarion

With the dearth of a dead
Lamentation.
Earth, earth, earth, I am;
As much, the dead will never be:
Cousin to phoenix and sphinx

Or that brazen sparrow bird
Who jargons in an Arab tree
His aviary of chosen lies.
And I with them am heard,
Who sieve the air and poise

A word to cuckold ears
A noise out of imagination
Moved by the wind's migration,
Said in the wind's benison,
But never what the wind said.

The heart beyond its furthest journey
is four knotted ventricles only.

The sun does not touch it, nor
the sparse green clamour

Of February where it falls in March
add a next resurrection or touch

Its power. Its furthest journey
is to reprieve the blood heavy

With body lumberings:
yesterday throbbed tomorrow brings

Before the dawn is certain on its head
or light has fingered into its red

Cellar. Bare, is memory bled
when the private heat is trod

First and last the chart and then the sea. Over all
the daft cry of the gulls, and over that the spire
bird; a clang from his hollowed-out chest, and the wind
over all
over all..
          glint making, to heave and repose, and heave
again and slide pieces of earth under the tide's palm;
root and bone into the miles of concave silt, and the
stone groins that joist the continents.

This tide is dark as pitchblende and has lights that
move and hesitate, and move again and surface in white
panes; poise brilliant, seem to pin sea's urge in swung
cleft, that beachcomber in the dawn might carve a wedge
out, and go home with the wind's forelock in his pouch,
and trace the sea's grain, finding out journeys and their
end.

By order of the public feet,
the anonymous rod and its brief

Purpose to call as witness
the trivial in secret fastness?

And possible to judge it fool beyond
its furthest journey? Land

Has no part of blood, or the coarse
geography of kind. The sky, worse

For the fictions written in its empty heart,
is nothing to it.

The wind hammered parts of cloud kings,
ruling the atlas of man memory

With blood desirings, are nothing to it.
Night houses and their animals,

(the Scorpion bites Centaur in my heart)
the starved menagerie of star clerks,

Readily acclaim their bite on blood;
leaving no legend in the brain.

And blood made public,
freezes, in the day's bright grain.

When we went the night apostles sat on the oarsgrip.
Day came; the girlhead, woodmade and sacred, dazed
by the waveheads, made sextant of the scud, foundered.

Like a parade of giants without clothes, the windmouthed
savants of Ptolemy, cartwheeled inside and split all
spinnakers. Phosphor ate hulk; the mast-stumps crowned

The beach, where were no cities but a coral yard,
and birds to range a promised burial. Tide's angelus
competes with wind for recognition in my ears.

Who has that anthem? Mine or theirs? Or both broken
and to be satisfied by one damp carol? Mostly for both,
the drowned and the to be drowned the waterminstrels

Murmur, and that is all; seawrack and the dawn's hot breath.

After my death
the sea has retentive music and
will sing again

After my death
the tide I heard in heart will
turn within and sway my body to
be again, child, in the moon's
white labour; while

the bore and scallop of it mar
the beach I walk in my one day

After my death
again, singing the petrel home
the wind, after its kind, will
spoor the running deer,

and bring them famished
to their doom of hunger
and to the hound's skin
pack and musket animals
of the land they run at
sunrise into firstblood

After my death
who will, as I heard, hear, the
waveclench at groin, the gnash
of rock and the strangle-weed
gripped to the earth's joist?

Fear as the red
wave struck me, sway, as the wind
made spirecock of me, rush of the
tide, drift of the furnished hill
where the beasts run arrowed, and
after them the famished beasts to
kill with hunger, here and there,
as the waterminstrels sing in brinegyves.

After my death
there is an end to this and to the
rest of me. I muster sea and the
retentive music there, to mark my
covenant.

I do not trust one century of
human eyes with this.

after my death the King
and the king's General
rule me; I doubt their
quality of anger

will contain one sentence
of tide whispering from
tongues of weed.

I do not trust one dumb empire of
human speech, to measure

deftly the wave's palm
over bedrock, and the fluke's
glint, shanked to the moon's
halftilted leash; or touch

with their conundrum oaths
the smallest dead.
I do not trust my past to muster
one lumber memory of they
who kneeled to woodgods

or sang ghosts away; one scud
of waterwraith to wrap my
claywandering bones fearsome

by day, or hug them in a
lighted dust, a seagorse
chain by night.
I do not trust a master-chart to bring
the bone evicted, summertided

home to Avalon; wizard and glass
craft gone; after my death,
hung up the sextant on a bird's claw;
the crewgaze drawn to a shifty

light, the wrangling guitar,
songthread in mastbrace.
I do not trust the deadeyes stare to
anywhere guide, other Hispaniola
and notide amberbeach, and

the threaded sticks with chains
to bind and curfew birds to eat
the sight of trove for bread,

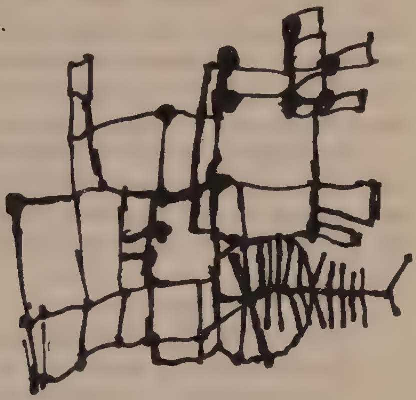
now Ariel, now Caliban,
sing for their daily dead
at dawn.
I do not trust even my truest ghost,
earth gimbelled house its only
home, to see the down's crest

bloody with hawthorn,
and win, light to itself,
from the new dawn's east.
Each time a year's pace, day's

stride takes, in the wintergarden
of the sun and its
gathering arm.

I do not trust even the nearest tongue
After my death, to mine, to trace
A counterpoint in air, or taste
The tidescurf in my blood.

christopher logue



three quiet lives

Miss Frost

APPLICANT'S name: Decker, Paul. Address: 28 Port Street. Library card number: 13,387. Miss Frost wrote a small, neat hand, watching the letters and figures take shape at the point of her pen and spin out behind her feather-white, fragile fingers like a fine hair, black—as no hair on her own head had been for the more than twelve years that had elapsed since her fiftieth birthday—and curiously twisted and broken, like a hair held too long in a dime-store curling iron. She reread the entry in the big green record book, checking it against the application form, and turned the slip of paper face-down on her desk with a faint feeling of warmth about her faded blue eyes that indicated satisfaction.

Behind her, she heard the protesting squeak of a hinge on the street-door and then a faint metallic thump as the door closed behind someone—a man or boy, from the heaviness of his tread—and, with a start, Evelyn calling out from her place at the Charge Desk a too quick and unnaturally loud "hello." Miss Frost turned.

It was Charles Miller.

Miss Frost noticed the neatness of his maroon tie, pinned at middle length to his shirt-front, as he had worn it when he worked in the stacks. A good boy, neat, hard-working, and respectful to his elders. "Hello, Charles," she said pleasantly.

"Hello, Miss Frost."

She turned back to her desk. As she picked up her pen, she heard Miss Tempest speaking to him, and wondered if she would finish writing overdue notices in time to get them into the last morning mail, but did not want to ask. She entered another name in the record book and carefully applied the posting blotter. Behind her, she heard Evelyn's voice, softer now and muffled, because she sat facing the street-door while Miss Frost faced the stacks, and then Charles' voice, strong and clear, because he, too, faced the stacks. Miss Frost wondered if the clatter of voices would carry past the reading-room door and disturb the readers. She checked the entry in the record book against the application form, and then checked the card number again before turning the slip over and putting it down.

From the left side of the lobby came the whoosh and slap and whoosh again of the reading-room door very carelessly opened and left to swing, and then a heavy shuffling. She looked around and instantly saw Mr. Blacknall as he really was, a foxily humble, irritating old man. What is it, this time?

"Yes, Mr. Blacknall?"

"I can't find the New York paper."

"It should be on the rack," she said.

"I can't find it," he mumbled.

"Have you seen the New York paper?" she asked, turning toward the other two women, letting her gaze rest at last upon Miss Tempest's violet eyes.

Miss Tempest stared, pursing her lips, then said vaguely, "I don't think so." She tapped the side of the pile of postcards in front of her and straightened up.

"Oh, no! Don't interrupt your work, Miss Tempest. I'll take care of Mr. Blacknall." Miss Frost rose. "I'll just look in the reading room first, Mr. Blacknall." She hurried towards the still swinging door.

She picked up each of the newspapers on the rack and read the name and date. Mr. Blacknall was nearsighted and might have overlooked his special paper among the others. But one was last night's local paper, and the other was that small weekly that Mr. Adams, the minister, had asked her to have the library take. She started down the aisle between the readers' tables, glancing at each table and chair. Mr. Blacknall was old and fussy. He might have taken his special paper from the rack and mislaid it, perhaps even on purpose, as she was sure that he had done that day last week when she had found it under one of the tables. But the paper was not in the reading room. She stopped, smoothing the bosom of her black dress where it wrinkled over her flat chest, and smiled semi-apologetically at the green-suited woman who looked up from her magazine. The woman smiled and went back to her reading.

Perhaps Evelyn took it in this morning (she usually gets the mail) and kept it at the desk, as she did the letters that time (when was it?)

last month, when she put them down for a moment and the book jackets were shoved over them and they were not found until late afternoon. Miss Frost hurried out of the reading room and saw Mr. Blacknall shuffling toward her. She passed him at about five feet, smiling apologetically, wanting to speak to him but not knowing quite what to say, only the obvious thing, that she had not found the paper and was going back to look on the Charge Desk, and not wanting to say that, knowing that the would think that she should have looked there in the first place. He shuffled past her, looking at the marble floor ahead of him. She felt a slight catch in her breathing and a trembling of irritation in her mouth and chin.

She stopped beside Charles, noticing that the book he had had when he came in still was in his hand, and picked up the pile of book jackets on the desk. The dating-stamp fell from between two jackets. She picked it up, her elbow brushing the sleeve of Charles' corduroy coat. "Oh, pardon me!" She handed the rubber stamp to Evelyn with a little rush of anger. Why was the boy still here? But Evelyn would have been forced to take the book, if he had wanted to be gone. Miss Frost's anger faded. The paper was not among the book jackets.

Perhaps it had not been taken from the box. She walked with short, stiff-kneed steps toward the box beside the street-door. As she opened the box, she wondered why men become so fussy and troublesome when they grow old. Mr. Blacknall must have his New York paper, and no other will do. He never loses an opportunity to make someone search for something. Why? The box was empty, and she suddenly realized that the paper must be late and probably would come in the second morning mail. If Evelyn had been listening when I asked about the paper, I wouldn't have had to search.

She closed the box and hurried back to the Charge Desk, afraid, now, that the delay might have offended Mr. Blacknall. Even if he was fussy and troublesome, she did not want him to be offended. She could not remember any library user ever having been offended, not since she had assumed responsibility as librarian, nor even when she had been an assistant.

"Mr. Blacknall went back to the reading room, did he not, Miss Tempest?"

Miss Tempest smiled. "Yes. I thought that he might like to go back to his seat and told him that someone would bring the paper when it was found."

"Thank you." Miss Frost wondered whether or not she should go to tell him that the paper had not come yet. The second mail should be here within ten minutes. With a rush of anger, she became aware of Charles still standing at the desk, in front of Evelyn. She turned and walked stiffly to her desk.

The legs of her chair scraped unaccountably as she pulled it away from the desk. She sat down with her back to Evelyn and Charles.

Evelyn's voice rose unexpectedly, almost frightening Miss Frost with its unbelievable loudness. Then, there was silence, and a moment later Miss Frost heard the thudding of Charles' heels, as he went out. She felt a sudden warmth towards Miss Tempest for having got Mr. Blacknall back to the reading room.

She wrote, "Michaels, Mrs. Clara. 172 Vine Street. 13,395." She covered the notation in each of the three columns with the posting blotter, then checked the whole entry and found it accurate with a feeling of calm satisfaction.

Miss Tempest

Miss Tempest laid the postcard on the pile of overdue notices that she had already written out and wondered to whom the next notice would go, to one of the regularly forgetful ones, or to some new violator, someone she did not know. Five mornings each week, between ten and eleven, she wrote out these gentle reminders to erring borrowers, trying as she put down one card to guess the name of the person to whom she must address the next. It was a game of which she never had tired.

The next card was to go to Wilkins, Mrs. Emmaline, that dowdy little woman with the orange hat that goes so poorly with her gray hair. Miss Tempest began to write, watching her soft, long-fingered hand move up and down and across the card, the skin of her hand yellowed slightly by the passing one by one of forty-five years until now it was almost the color of the card.

She heard the soft thud of the street-door closing behind someone and, then, from the other end of the long desk, Evelyn's bouncing, schoolgirlish "hello", and looked up and saw the fine, broad forehead and good, dark gray eyes of Charles Miller.

From her desk in the rear, Miss Frost said, "Hello, Charles."

"Hello, Charles. How are you?" Miss Tempest's big, square face softened, and she smiled.

"Fine, thank you."

His strong, clear tenor caused a stirring in Miss Tempest's chest, and her violet eyes darkened and her smile broadened. Then, Evelyn spoke to him, and he no longer was looking at her. Miss Tempest felt a sudden hollowness in her throat and lowered her eyes.

But Mrs. Wilkins no longer interested her. Miss Tempest realized this with a feeling approaching alarm. Then, she forgot all about Mrs. Wilkins and looked up, at Charles' beautiful forehead and fine, straight nose.

She caught a glimpse of old Mr. Blacknall coming from the reading room and shuffling toward the desk, and turned guiltily back to Mrs. Wilkins.

Miss Frost turned and said, "Yes, Mr. Blacknall?"

Then, Miss Frost turned toward her. "Have you seen the New York paper?"

Miss Tempest only half heard, struggling to drive Charles from her mind and think once more of Mrs. Wilkins. She stared at Miss Frost, in confusion, pursed her lips worriedly, and at last murmured, "I don't think so." She tapped the pile of cards and straightened up, thinking that she should get up and go back to the reading room with Mr. Blacknall.

"Oh, no! Don't interrupt your work, Miss Tempest. I'll take care of Mr. Blacknall", Miss Frost said quickly.

Miss Tempest felt a sting of shame at the implied rebuke and, then, resentment. She finished with Mrs. Wilkins and began a new card, to L. Hilton.

Then, Miss Frost was gone.

Mr. Blacknall coughed, a little, nervous, old man's cough, and scraped the toe of his shoe on the floor.

Miss Tempest glanced at the patch of golden brown where the sunlight came through the skylight and fell on the long desk. She looked at Mr. Blacknall and smiled, a sedate smile that curved the corners of her mouth but did not bow her lips, as she had bowed them when she had smiled at Charles. "My! Isn't the sunlight warm, Mr. Blacknall?"

"Yes," he said faintly. His faded blue eyes turned away from hers, as they did whenever he answered her, whether from shyness or lack of interest she did not know.

Her eyes were drawn once more to Charles' handsome face. She found herself wondering if in secret he wrote poems. His face was all light, beauty, like the face of Shelley in the print over the card index case. She remembered talking to him at the desk one evening when she had had to work late, last winter, when he had worked as a stack boy. He had seemed intelligent beyond his years—eighteen, then, as Evelyn was now—so well-read. Yes, he must write poems.

Miss Tempest's thought went back twenty-five years, to Owen, a faceless memory, now; but he had seen so handsome when he had come to see her at this same desk. She remembered him as having been handsome. And she had been handsome, too, with a proud lift to her then only slightly squarish face. She wondered why he had stopped coming to see her—why, he had not even asked her to go out with him!——and where he was and what he looked like, now. A feeling of sadness came over her and she wondered if there ever would be anyone, even an older man, for her, now.

Suddenly she realized that she was staring at Charles quite openly, and that her bosom—that huge, soft bosom that had been such an embarrassment to her ever since her fifteenth birthday—was too much in evidence. She felt a blush beginning, warming her face and neck, and turned quickly to Mr. Blacknall.

He was smiling, perhaps at her, or only to himself, at some secret joke, as her father had smiled to himself when very old.

"Oh, Mr. Blacknall, you must be tired of standing! If you'd like to go back to your desk, I promise you that either Miss Frost or I will bring the paper to you as soon as it's found."

"Thank you," he said weakly, and shuffled toward the door to the reading room.

Miss Frost hurried up to the desk and stopped beside Charles and picked up the pile of book jackets on the desk.

Miss Tempest tugged at the lapels of her pearl-gray suit-coat and fastened the top button, better concealing her ample bosom, and bent over her work.

Miss Frost hurried toward the mailbox.

Miss Tempest again looked up at Charles. He had turned toward her slightly, although he still was talking to Evelyn. Miss Tempest was not sure that he could not see her out of the corner of his eye, and did not want to look directly at his face again. Her eyes followed the curving line of the lapel on his corduroy coat. She thought that he would look very nice in a brown suit, such as Owen had worn. The sport combination, maroon coat and chocolate trousers, was a bit too flashy for him. A brown suit with a blue pinstripe would be better. But, she thought quickly, like Shelley, he would be beautiful no matter how he dressed. A sweet, sweet, lovely boy! She cradled the fountain pen in the palm of her hand, gently, as if she were cupping his cheek, his curly, black hair.

Evelyn's high, school-girlish voice pierced Miss Tempest's reverie. Miss Tempest turned toward her. She noticed the faint sheen of the golden down on the girl's forearms, bare below the three-quarter-length sleeves of her blue dress, and thought, How lucky blonde girls are! The fine, black hairs on her own arms and legs always had embarrassed her. How lucky she is! Miss Tempest felt a slight dislike for her. Her thin, already bent shoulders and flat, bony temples suggested Miss Frost.

Miss Tempest again looked at Charles. She wished that he would begin to talk to Evelyn about some other girl, hoping that he had another for his girl and was only talking idly to Evelyn and would begin to talk about the other. He was much too handsome and intelligent for such a dull, show-crazy child. Dear lovely, glorious lad! Miss Tempest found herself wondering what his mother was like and wishing that she knew her well enough to visit her some evening. Oh, dear, sweet, lovely boy!

Miss Frost came back from the mailbox and stopped just behind Charles'elbow.

Miss Tempest looked down at a blank, brownish yellow postcard.

"Mr. Blacknall went back to the reading room, did he not, Miss Tempest?"

Miss Tempest looked up again, forcing a smile. "Yes. I thought that he might like to go back to his seat and told him that someone would bring the paper when it was found."

"Thank you." Miss Frost stood a moment, still looking at her. Then, she glanced at Charles and turned quickly, as if angry, and walked back to her desk.

Miss Tempest focused her violet eyes on the name Martensen, Mr. Helgo, and began to write. She heard Miss Frost's chair scrape as it was pulled away from the desk in the rear, and then she heard Evelyn, at the other end of the Charge Desk, say the word "roses." A moment later, she heard the sound of Charles' footsteps becoming hollow, as he walked toward the street-door. She finished with Mr. Martensen, but the address on the card was barely legible. She stared at it, surprised. Then, she noticed that her armpits were unpleasantly moist and cold and that her hands felt tired and weak, as if they had been trembling.

Evelyn

Evelyn sat with her hands folded, one about the other, in front of her, and stared at a sharp, little knuckle on her right hand. The library quiet, broken only by the occasional scratching of Miss Tempest's pen, constrained her, like a tight petticoat. She felt that she was about to jump out of her skin.

She heard the catch on the street-door click and looked up. Through the glass, she saw a maroon coat and a man's curly, balck hair. Then, as the door opened, she saw Charles Miller's broad, pale forehead and gray eyes. Her eyes met his, and she smiled.

He came toward her slowly, hesitantly.

"Hello," she said, trying to make the greeting sound both ladylike and gay. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the green shape of the book that he was returning, and automatically picked up the dating-stamp, and instantly was sorry.

"Hello," he said, and smiled.

A little wave of excitement passed over her, momentarily obscuring her thought, and when it had passed she found that the dating-stamp no longer was in her hand. Good little hand!

Miss Frost said, "Hello, Charles."

He said, "Hello, Miss Frost."

Then, Evelyn heard Miss Tempest's silky-voiced "Hello, Charles." and her "How are you?" Her fingertips felt cold, as they always did when she became impatient, and she was afraid that Miss Tempest would talk to him so long that he would become nervous and not try to talk to *her*, and would not ask her to go out with him. She wondered what he would want to do, take her dancing or to a movie, and hoped that it would be to a movie. Unwittingly she again picked up the dating-stamp.

He turned toward her, the hand holding the book starting to move forward, then jerking back.

Another wave of excitement passed over her. He does want to talk to me! He is going to ask! She tried to help him to get started. "Did you enjoy your book?"

"Yes." He smiled shyly.

She tried to think of something else to talk about. But the only thing that she could think of was the movie that she and Sis had seen last night, and it would be too obvious to speak of that. She fell back on a smile, her warmest, that curved her lips softly and made happy, little wrinkles about the corners of her pale blue eyes, asking him and thanking him at the same moment.

He fumbled at the cover of the book, trying to open it.

His clumsiness irritated her, and she had to suppress a desire to tell him that she was not at all interested in the book.

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw old Mr. Blacknall coming from the reading room and felt a thrill of fear that he would come up behind Charles and that she would have to finish with Charles and wait on him. Her fingertips pressed hard against the handle of the dating-stamp, and she looked down, suddenly hating it, as she hated the dish towel at night, when she wanted to go to a movie.

Behind her, Miss Frost spoke. "Yes, Mr. Blacknall?"

Evelyn felt a wave of relief surge up from her stomach, and a lightness in her chest and softness in her throat that made her forget her irritation at Charles' awkwardness.

Miss Frost walked toward the reading room.

Evelyn's hand moved toward the pile of book jackets, and when it came back, the dating-stamp was gone. She smiled at Charles, pursing her lips invitingly, as the secretary had done just before the buyer had kissed her, in last night's movie.

But Charles only shifted his weight from one foot to the other nervously.

At the other end of the long desk, Miss Tempest spoke to Mr. Balcknall. "My! Isn't the sunlight warm, Mr. Blacknall? "

Evelyn felt a little sting of jealous resentment toward Miss Tempest. Why did she have to think of that? Why couldn't I have said it to Charles? She felt lost.

"It wasn't very warm in here nights last winter," Charles said awkwardly.

"Oh, it isn't cold at all!" Evelyn said eagerly.

"You haven't felt winter yet and, besides, you work days," he said, smiling.

"No, I haven't felt winter," she admitted. "It... it wasn't cold last night, and I was out quite late. It... it will be lovely tonight, I'm sure," she said, trying to lead him.

"Yes. It should be," he said.

She again felt lost and, then, impatient, wanting to ask him what he did with his evenings, anyway. But she only waited, looking at him and hoping. Then, she again was aware of Miss Tempest's presence at the other end of the desk. She must have seen how I've been leading him on, and she'll talk about me to Miss Frost, and I'll never know what she says! Evelyn's cheeks felt warm. She cast a sidelong glance at Miss Tempest and saw that she was leaning forward—and smiling at

Charles—leaning forward so that he'll be sure to see her ugly, fat breasts! Evelyn hated her.

Miss Tempest turned toward Mr. Blacknall.

Mr. Blacknall left.

Miss Frost hurried back to the desk and picked up the pile of book jackets. The dating-stamp fell to the desk with a small thump.

Evelyn's breath stuck in her throat.

Miss Frost picked the dating-stamp up and handed it to her with a quick, short movement of her arm, as if she were angry. But her elbow touched Charles' coat-sleeve, and instead of speaking about the dating-stamp, she turned to him with an apology.

"Oh, pardon me!"

Charles smiled.

Miss Frost picked the book jackets up and put them down again.

Evelyn's fear turned to anger. What does she expect to find there? She only wants to make Charles go. Fussy, old thing!

Miss Frost turned away.

Evelyn smiled at Charles. "Tonight will be too nice to stay home," she said, hinting.

"Yes. You... you know, the roses still are blooming in Thornton Park," he said nervously.

"Oh, no! I didn't know!" she said excitedly. "I'll have to see them, but... but I'm afraid that that will have to wait," she said, trying to make her voice sound regretful and then, quickly, gay and hopeful again. "There's a movie at the Echo tonight that I've been dying to see, for weeks."

He was silent again, only shifting his weight back from his left foot to his right.

Evelyn again was aware of Miss Tempest's presence at the other end of the desk. She's watching me, now! Evelyn felt a blush move up to her cheeks and started to lean forward—as Miss Tempest had done—not to be able to see her even out of the corner of her eye. But her own breasts would seem so small and flat. She caught herself just in time, and sat still, hating Miss Tempest. That awful old maid!

Miss Frost came back and stood just behind Charles' elbow and spoke to Miss Tempest. "Mr. Blacknall went back to the reading room, did he not, Miss Tempest?"

"Yes," Miss Tempest said. "I thought that he might like to go back to his seat and told him that someone would bring the paper when it was found."

"Thank you." Miss Frost looked at Charles, then at Evelyn, little ridges of anger forming among the wrinkles about the corners of her mouth, and walked stiffly toward her desk.

A faint pink crept into Charles' cheeks.

Evelyn hurriedly picked up the dating-stamp and held her hand out to Charles for the book.

Behind her, Miss Frost's chair scraped loudly.

Evelyn stamped the date under "returned" on the slip in the back of the book and on Charles' library card. "I'd love to see the roses, Charles, really." She tried to smile, but only the corners of her mouth curved. Her lips were cold.

His face turned red. He did not reply.

She held the card out to him.

He took it and turned.

She watched the maroon coat and curly, black hair go out the door and down the front steps. She felt as she had on that afternoon when she had at last come home from school knowing that she would not be at the Prom that night, that she had not been invited : alone, empty, and ashamed. Her whole face was cold. She glanced covertly at Miss Tempest, but all that she saw was the net of fine gray over her black hair and the powder flaked high on one cheek. At her desk in the rear, Miss Frost laid her pen down with a barely audible tap. Evelyn's arms felt unnaturally heavy, tired. She folded her hands in front of her with a distinct effort.

h. m. phillips

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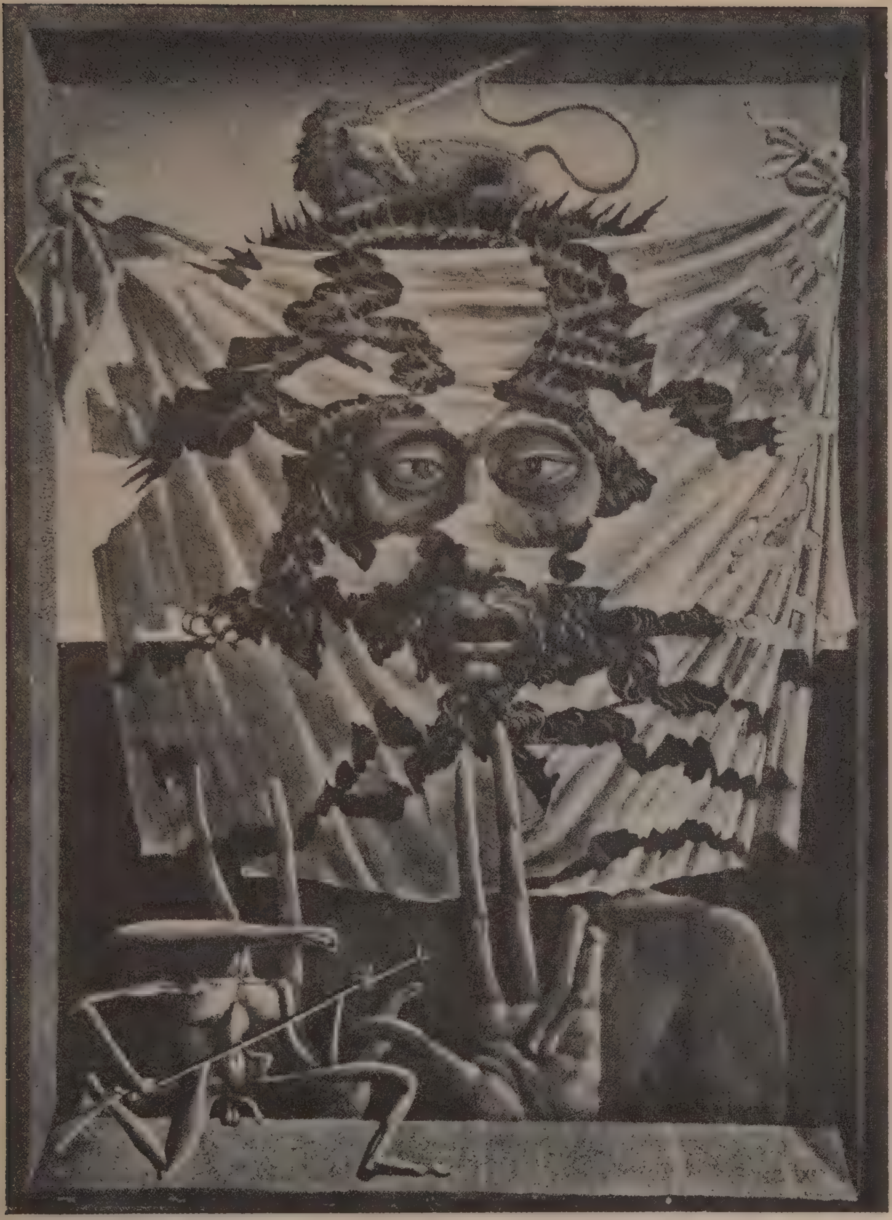
ernst fuchs

Ernst Fuchs, a young Viennese painter still in his early twenties, at present works in Paris. Unlike most young painters, who in their teens begin painting under the influence of a vague and uncritical academicism which later they discard for some form of post-Impressionism, Fuchs began at a very young age to paint like the German Expressionists. Towards the end of this period he was directly influenced by Picasso, and, amongst the Surrealists, by Dali and Tanguy.

His later development is unambiguous. While most of his contemporaries have passed from an uncritical acceptance of academicism to an equally uncritical acceptance of the non-objectivity of Mondrian or Hans Hoffman, Fuchs has undergone what from one point of view may be described as a reversion. In his whole approach he may be compared to the Renaissance craftsman dedicated to a difficult craft. His present oils might have been painted by a Leonardo, but by a Leonardo hypersensitive to the nightmarish aspects of modern civilisation (his obvious relation to Hieronymus Bosch).

Fuchs' procedure is to move from what to many of his contemporaries would appear to be a finished abstract to something more obviously representational. The formal conception is worked out in an abstract way and then, in the course of three months' attention to detail, is transcended. To watch each anonymous mass take on its final definition is, figuratively, to witness in the texture of the paint itself the gradual development of a foetus. The finished work is often (cf. actual-size reproduction opposite) as small as 24 square inches. In both composition and detail Fuchs' draftmanship is as impeccable as that of either Van Eyck or Durer.

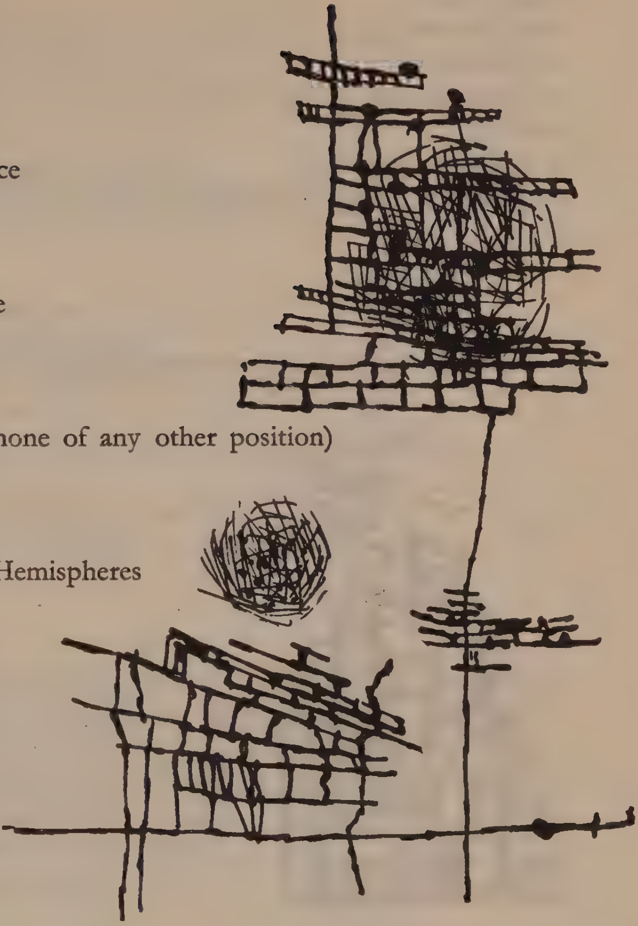
jane lougee



Ernst Fuchs

Head of Christ, Oil
(original size)

portrait



As night fell
sans paramour
and spoordrawn into dance
he came to the city
city of obelisk
and risk
tambourine, turkspleasure
swarthy muleteer
the abominable Berthe
à plat ventre
(they say she will have none of any other position)

he drank
vin blanc
in the Café of the Two Hemispheres
ignored
the Sisters of Mercy
the gentle supplication
of the peanut vendor
the vendor of lotteries
and
lothe to offend her
told
the abominable Berthe
a plain untruth
about his condition

not held
by the gay synopsis
of murder
the little red calvary in the third column
(the paper bored him
humanists bred him
logic cured him)
he ordered oysters
—a broken acrobat, a strangled nude
possibly one of the Merciful Sisters
—and counted the shells

the café spread
a helio lance
in the hollow ingot
of his isolation
(the oysters were no consolation).
truthfully
he would have settled
for something rather less than a woman of the Ptolemies.

---

wind from the bosphoros

Tzigane
Late of the Bosphoros
Come through the stink of many nations
On a painted cart
To water himself, his brown-thighed woman
Brats
His bow-legged knackery
In the mauve bole of Paris.

wind from the bosphoros

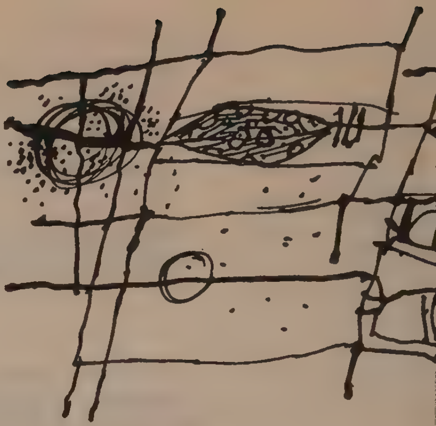
In Greece
He got one child and syphilis
Discreetly, of a blonde Roumanian tart
Who (torn in her shy soul)
Spent half her time being a refugee, the other
Half
Bucking for dear life
Under the swarthy weight of sailors.

A young man
Stalking a butterfly
Found a flare-red skirt, a high-cheeked
Gypsywoman
And lay with her behind a bush in adultery
Caught
Still supine, the winds of the east
And of Roumanian Anna.

Later
He carried with him
More than a gypsy's fading heat, but was not
Much concerned
Desire being international, of more significance
Than the incidental *cum multis aliis*
He carried to the clinic
Where

He was treated
By more civilized persons who showed
Little interest
In what they called (with an utter lack of sensibility)
"The source of infection"
As though
Nothing else had been carried to him from the east
On the wind of her body.

alexander trocchi



A Ballad

life,

O LIFE was jolly in the sunlight, splashing the cod around. Water playing on our slab, ferns as cool as green, the whitest tiles in town.

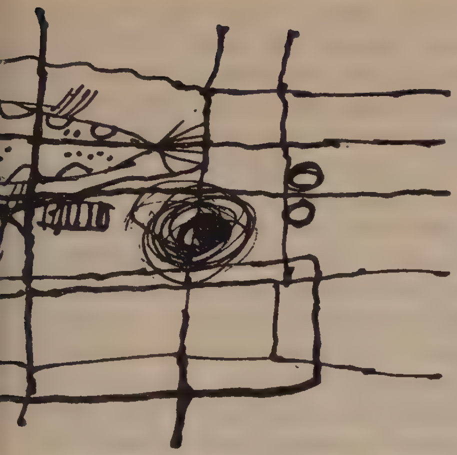
It was my happy job to set the fish for show. I'd take a turbot say for central, a heavy fellow white and round. Then red lobsters, I'd ring my lobsters round that turbot, all their noses in, to make the petals of a flower. Then I'd take a cut of haddock, place this yellow by the turbot's head. I don't know why I put that haddock at the head, more than at tail or sides. I don't know what I did not half the time. But it always came out right. I've that eye for colour: and I'd parsley my lobsters, green to red.

Jim-at-the-Back would be out the back, sluicing his wood with water. Back in the dark with his gas-blue jet, getting out his gut-knives, sloshing on his footboards, thudding on his crates and whistling a song. A busy music Jim made, his hose made music—morning music that was, music of day to begin, bright as the rattling of our shutter when we hoisted her to let all light come flooding in. Like a curtain, our green shutter; and opening her a chorus.

Now I had my white coat and my blue apron, and now I'd jam my straw on pleased to greet the trade. But first I could finish off—now I'd got my central. Mackerel, trouts and my red-spotted plaicelings—those coloured fellows I would take next. Striped mackerels I'd make into a ring, and place a crab within. Two rings I'd make, one each side to balance. Then stars of rainbow trout, all wet colours of the rainbow dew. But my plaice—my good brown plaice with the bright red dabs, these I'd bend tail to head, tail to head so they'd make a round, and I'd set them plumb in middle below the big turbot, for a braver-marked fish would be hard to find.

And right down further—though this was not the least important—there'd be ordinaries . . . the herrings, the whiting, the cods. *They'd* go on trays. But I'd range them neatly as the rest: and in their middle place a tray of rich pink shrimps. But my long fish, you'll say? My three H's, rule of three and thumb, haddock and hake and halibut? My pike if you like? Yes, they'd all come in—they'd come in squaring up the rest, they'd come for squaring up. I'd put a lemon in a big pike's mouth, lemon to teeth, and sometimes there'd be mullet like coral and bream as pink-brown babies. And soles with their faces all one side—a tearful sight.

Scallops? What with my scallops?



death

Lump them in middle, a bunch of fresh-poached eggs? Make circles of them round my soles? Line them up to write my name? Not I! That I never would!... No, I'd put one of them here and one of them there, and one more there and another here—so they'd be eyed all over the place. And if Jim-at-the-Back came front and queried, "Where's your poached, my Charley-boy, my Barley?"—I'd wink and tell him: "Look for yourself, Jim." And he'd look, you know, he'd look for such a while before he'd see them! But after, he'd see them everywhere, he'd see nothing but these scallops. "You could knock me down," Jim'd say. I'd say, "That's art, Jim."

Yes, life was jolly—but I'm not getting to my point of this: which was *her*.

One day I'd no idea she stepped on earth: and the next she was there with her long brown eyes and her white small face to ask me for herring in my queue. That was the time I saw her first, and I've not forgotten it from that day nor ever will. Shy she whispered what she wanted—and I had to bend my head to hers to ask her what was that she'd said. I bent my head and she looked wide of eye and whispered it again: "Two herring, please". Wide of eye, a baby animal.

Her mouth was twice itself with red, she had a cap-thing on her head, she had trousers—but she still was a little animal, she grabbed her shop-bag hands together more like a squirrel: and when I'd given her her two she was off bent over it and in little steps quick gone.

Me I stood there jumboed. Out of my wits awhile I was. Me, with all the skirt I have each day, fat ones, thin ones, young ones, old ones, cheery ones that pass the time of day, crabby ones all price and pokefinger. And never a tremor goes through me till that time. I must've stood there seconds looking after her, I was seized, and I see I only saw my senses when a big brown voice came in my earhole: "Have you got *all* the day?" But then I thought I had.

All day I thought of her, all day I'd do nothing right, all day I had her picture in my eye. What was my pride in our slab, I'd never sell a fish from its place without something cut me deep. But the day I first saw *her*—I sold helter-skelter where you please, mackerel from stars, trouts from their triangles, lobsters in fours from my flower of turbotpiece.

But the next day she was back. And the day after. And the day after that! And on the fourth day, when I handed her her herring, I stuttered two extra in her hand, sleighty my hand to hers, but bold as gold with a wink for her alone. She took the herring. She did not smile. Only over her face that was so small and white came a blush spreading rose as red, and on her neck too, for she had hung her shy head. Then she was off, no word.

Yet she knew and I knew. And I was happy that day with myself for being so bold: for I had dared give away fish with Milly dark like a crab in her cash behind, and I had dared speak a first word to my love, though this was but with wink and hand.

So I was happier than for all time past. In my straw in the sun, tiles around, my good slab iced, my slab with water-spray and fern: red buses passing huge out front, and people always passing too—all busy passing in the sun, and a smile from me with my straw cocked and my heart a-wing. Even Milly got a smile, I could smile for dark Milly. She sat in her cash all day, dark like a spider-crab taking the flies of fish and giving them again for pennies and silver: or like a foreign god she was, one with six arms, taking offerings in her fat hole and chinking wealth and prayer all day, or the night that was day for *her*. But I gave her a smile. And old Jim-at-the-Back thought I was crazed with my digs and my whistles, I heard him chuckle over the sluice of slice and gut out back.

You can be sure I slipped my love some extra every day. And now one day she gave me back a smile, one day when she summonsed up the heart. And though I'm an ordinary fellow, none too hang-back, none too bold—that day I leapt in, to her smile I leapt in and whispered "Pictures?" Again she blushed. "Come on!" I said. She shook her head. "Right-Ho, no fish!„ I said. And all the queue behind!

So then as a small wind might have passed across her came her nod. I slapped the fish in her hand "Half-after-six?" I asked. Once more the little wind. "Where?" I asked. Then she said the word, the first but for herring I'd heard. "Gaumont," she whispered like a thief. And she hurried away.

Now my heart sang twice. Once for her and me, together now. And once for the word she said. For she said this word like Gawmont. She never said that Gomong. And I knew from this she had no lah-da, she was one with me, we would go well together she and I.

That night I brought caramels, and in the dark we sat with these. What went on the screen, don't ask *me*. I have no recollection. With her in the dark, sunk small in her seat, arms not even on the arms, I could be only like some dynamo, some great hot engine pumping up beside her, I had fear my blood would be heard. After, we went to a fry-shop—for it seemed she was a girl for fish. Myself in the trade, I do not take to the cuts they give in those shops: but that night I ate with will, I did not know what I ate, and all I know was I knew now her name. And this was Lily.

Lil was alone, her mum and dad were far away. I was alone, I lived alone in my room. Two alone, we grew to know one another, we went out time and then again. Soon I held her hand, and soon I kissed her. Then we were betrothed.

I knew I must marry my Lil, and that was what Lil wanted too. I had few savings, though a few. I was never one for the beer, I could go days with nothing to want but my dinner and my bed. I liked a nice picture, a bus to the country. But that cost little: it was pop for me, no beer. So I could save. With me my only curse was caramels. Caramels were what I could scoff by the pound. Sometimes I went for nut-crunch—but that was but a mood, as people change their mind: and always I was back for caramels. Rations never worried *me*: I'd swop all else for caramels.

A simple taste, you'll say. But a taste the same. And that's where the money went. So though with others smokes and girls might sound a stronger vice, caramels were no less vice for me. Caramels were my sin. For each time I headed for the shop I had to think: "Half-pound? Pound?..." And stop myself for money's sake. Temptation lay as strong as liquor, caramels so sweet were poison for my purse.

But now I was with Lil I had to curb myself the more. Save I must, for us to marry. Save, save hard. Lil my sweet animal saved too—though she worked only as maid, though she had little enough.

Work harder! But none could work harder than I, nor with more joy. I loved my work and where I worked. No, this meant work of another kind—work harder meant that I must try for manager. I must leave my slab and go up one.

It's from then I reckon the shade that fell on my path. Life that had been jolly no longer was. My slab I loved was no more good for me. I smiled more at my trade, but grieved the time it took to smile: I took with my slab a greater pain, but grieved the minutes spent. For all I thought was: "Oh for the day to be done, so one more day may dawn until I'm up for manager." I now had responsibilities who had none of these before. Sure as my Lil had come to lift my heart, so a burden came to shaden it. I lived no longer for my happy day, it was tomorrow *I* wanted.

And the weeks went by. I knew my time would come, there's talk in the trade. But it took a time coming. Though those weeks were not without their up and down. One day, for instance, my dad came to town. And I set a special tea for him, and I asked Lil. Fish-tea, seeing Lil was asked, and I took back a fine roe to cook this a way I know. Dad met Lil, and dad was stern as dads can be. I thought: "Now we're for it, now we're off!" and set myself to rub him up his right way. But—not a bit of that, I could have spared my tongue! For my Lil opens like a flower, all sudden she starts to chat and laugh and play the pretty goat. And soon she has my dad on the reins, she has him chatting and laughing and playing the goat there too! My Lil had upped and taken charge, it was only she rubbed my dad up his right way. Who'd have thought this of shy Lil? The mischief in them—that day she made me proud and happy as kings can be. "It's the quiet ones," I said, but I don't know now what I meant by *that*. For who was being quiet?

Then another day, for instance, I slipped my Lil her extra mackerel—it was mackerel now for her. And off she went. But no sooner was it afternoon when Lil was back, and back beside herself. "These fish are off!" she comes straight out all over the shop, for all ears to hear. Jim-at-the-Back pops out his head, and I saw something move in dark Milly's cash—it was Milly raised her head. Now Lil was regular those days and Milly knew each day what pence she spent. She spent for two fish, never four. But there she stood with four, all off, for all to see. "There's more that's off than the fish," I thought, "there's my girl Lil gone off her nut." And that was so, out of her mind she was, all else was out of her mind but that her fish was off. She was a girl standing on her rights, no less than that. "Goodbye Manager," I thought, "It'll be Charley-at-the-Back and Jim-out-Front when *this* is done."

For up went Milly's window, and Milly starts in straight that Lil had only two fish and now how were there four to be off? You could see Milly thinking.

I prayed, then took a header in. "Lil," I said, "you're wandering, girl. You never got those fish from here. Those ones must be fish your mistress bought". Now thank my stars Lil saw. "Why!" she said, and "I declare!" she said, and looking at those fish like strangers "*I* beg pardon." And we all had a laugh. But it was a creepy laugh, that laugh. And from that time on I never slipped my Lil another extra fish. Too much lay at stake for that.

Thus we had our up and down. The weeks went by. And surely came the day when I went up for manager. Goodbye to my slab, it was the depot for me. I wore no straw but a dark suit collared, and I went up two quid a week. Now I could save indeed. Through the dark winter I checked the ones that checked the crates, and no caramel passed my lips but a few for Christmas. Through wet February I saved, and March, April too. Until a month in Spring my lovely Lil I naved, she wed me in the Spring. Nor was there ever tile so white as she upon her wedman's day.

We settled in. And in the time it takes Lil gave me our nipper. A little girl, like Lil, our little nipper.

We were so happy, just the three, there was glory all around. But then it came that two of us died. Two left the three, two just wilted—but for why?—and died, Lil and our nipper passed away. A year alone we were together, then they died.

They've gone, I said, my loved ones both are gone. Please only give me back my slab—and they, who knew, did that. But I tell you this, my slab never is the same again, there's shade about for me.

No, I'm not broke, I'll crack a joke, I'll share a bag of caramel with Mill, with Jim who's gutting down the back. But life's no more the same. Why, if *you* can tell me, such happy days? Why with happy days such shade?

william sansom

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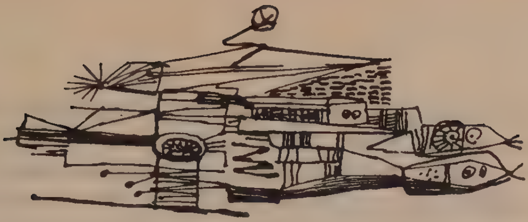
achonacher

Unmoving river, tonight, so palpably still,
under how many stars do you glide from time!
Now, as I watch you, the moon climbs
over my shoulder, climbs
over Achonacher, the five paps of her
glittering escarpment.

alan riddell



fragment from Plexus

Thinking about Dave and his utter goodness it came to me that I hadn't seen my cousin Gene for a long long time. All I knew about him was that he had moved from Yorkville some years ago and was now living on Long Island with his two sons who were growing up.

I wrote him a post-card, saying I'd like to see him again, and asked where we might meet. He wrote back immediately, suggesting an elevated station near the end of the line.

I had fully intended to take with me a good package of groceries and some wine, but the best I could do on setting out to meet him was to rake up a little change, just about enough to get there and back. If he's working, thought I to myself, he can't be so terribly hard up. At the last minute I tried to borrow a dollar from the blind newspaperman at Borough Hall, but in vain.

It was something of a shock I experienced when I saw Gene standing on the platform with his little lunch box in his hand. His hair had already turned gray. He wore a pair of patched trousers, a thick sweater, and a peak cap. His smile, however, was radiant, his handclasp warm. In greeting me his voice trembled. It was still that deep, warm voice which he had even as a boy.

We stood there gazing into each other's eyes for a minute or two. Then he said, in that old Yorkville accent : "You look fine, Henry."

"You look good yourself," said I, "only a little thinner."

"I'm getting old," said Gene, and he removed his cap to show me how bald he was getting.

"Nonsense", I said, "you're only in your thirties. Why, you're still a youngster."

"No," he replied, "I've lost my pep. I've had a hard time of it, Henry."

That's how it began. I realized at once that he was telling me the truth. He was always candid, frank, sincere.

We marched down the elevated stairs into the middle of nowhere. Such a God-forsaken spot it was; something told me it would become more so as we journeyed onward.

I got it slowly, piecemeal more and more heartrending as the story progressed. To begin with, he was only working two or three days a week. Nobody wanted beautiful pipe cases any more. It was his father who had found a place for him in the factory. (Ages ago, it seemed.) His father hadn't believed in wasting time getting an education. I didn't need to be reminded of what a boor his father was : always sitting around in his red flannel undershirt, winter or summer, with a can of beer in front of him. One of those thick Germans who would never change.

Gene had married, two children had been born, and then, while the kids were still little tots, his wife had died of cancer, a painful, lingering death. He had used up all his savings and gone deep into debt. They had only been in the country, as he called it, a few months when his wife died. It was just at this time that they laid him off at the factory. He had tried raising tropical fish but it was no go. The trouble was that he had to find work he could do at home because there was no one to look after the kids. He did the cooking, the washing, the mending, the ironing, every-thing. He was alone, terribly alone. He never got over the loss of his wife whom he had loved dearly.

All this as we wended our way to his house. He hadn't yet asked me a thing about myself, so absorbed was he in the narration of his miseries. When we got off the bus, finally, there was a long walk through dingy suburban streets to what looked like a vacant lot, at the very end of which stood his little shack, shabby, woebegone, exactly like the dwellings of the poor white in the deep South. A few flowers were struggling desperately to maintain life outside the front door. They looked pathetic. We walked in and were greeted by his sons, two good-looking youngsters who seemed somewhat undernourished. Quiet, grave lads, strangely sombre and reserved. I had never seen them before. I felt more than ever ashamed of myself for not bringing something.

I felt I had to say something to clear myself.

"You don't have to tell me," said Gene. "I know what it's like."

"But we're not always broke" I said. "Listen, I'm going to come soon again, very soon, I promise you. And I'll bring my wife along next time."

"Don't talk about it," said Gene. I'm so glad you came. We have some lentil soup on the stove, and we have some bread. We won't go hungry."

He began again—about the days when they didn't have a crumb to eat, when he had grown so desperate that he had gone to his neighbors and begged for a little food—just for the children.

"But Dave would have helped you, I'm sure," I said. "Why didn't you ask *him* for money?"

He looked pained. " You know it is. You don't like to borrow from your relatives."

"But Dave isn't just a relative."

"I know, Henry, but I don't like to ask for help. I'd rather starve. If it weren't for the kids I guess I would have starved."

While we were talking the kids had slipped out, to return in a few minutes with some cabbage leaves, celery and radishes.

"You shouldn't have done that, "said Gene, admonishing them gently.

"What did they do?" I asked.

"Oh, they filched those things from a neighbor of ours who's away."

"Good for them!" I said. "Damn it, Gene, they've got the right idea. Listen, you're too modest, or too proud, I don't know which." I apologized at once. How could I berate him for his simple virtues? He was the essence of kindness, gentleness, true humility. Every word he uttered had a golden ring. He never blamed anybody, nor life either. He spoke as if it were all an accident, part of his private destiny, and not to be questioned.

"Maybe they could dig up a little wine too," I said, half in joke, half in earnest.

"I forgot all about that," said Gene blushingly. "We've got a little wine in the cellar. It's home made wine...elderberry... can you drink it? I've been saving if for just such an occasion."

The boys had already slipped downstairs. They were becoming more expansive with each sally. "They're fine boys, Gene," I said. "What are they going to do when they grow up?"

"They won't go into the factory, that's one thing I know. I'm going to try to send them to college. I think it's important to have a good education. Little Arthur, the youngest one, he wants to become a doctor. The big fellow is a wild one; he wants to go West and become a cowboy. But he'll get over that soon, I guess. They read these silly Westerns, you know."

Suddenly it occurred to him to ask if I didn't have a child.

"That was by my other wife" I said. "A girl."

He was amazed to learn that I had re-married. Divorce, apparently, was something which never entered his head.

"Does your wife work too?" he asked.

"In a way, " I said. I didn't know quite how to explain the complexities of our life in a few words.

"I suppose," he said next, "you're still in the cement company."

The cement company! I nearly fell off the chair.

"Why no, Gene," I said, "I'm a writer now. Didn't you know that?"

"*A writer?*" It was his turn to be astonished. His face lit up with pleasure. "It doesn't really surprise me, though," he said. "I remember how you used to read to us kids in the old days. We always fell asleep on you, remember?" He paused to reflect, his head bowed, then looked up and remarked: "Of course you had a good education too, didn't you?" He said it as if he had been an immigrant boy who had been denied the usual privileges of an American.

I tried to explain that I hadn't gone very far in school, that we were practically in the same boat. In the middle of it I suddenly asked if he ever read any more.

"Oh yes," he answered brightly. "I read quite a little. Nothing much else to do, you know." He pointed to the shelf in back of me where his books were lodged. I turned round to glance at the titles: Dickens, Scott, Thackeray, the Bronte sisters, George Eliot, Balzac, Zola...

"I don't read any of the modern trash," he said, answering my unvoiced question.

We sat down to eat. The boys were ravenously hungry. Again I felt a pang of remorse. I realized that had I not been there they would have eaten twice as much. As soon as the soup was finished we tackled the greens. They had no oil, no dressing of any kind, not even mustard. The bread had given out too. I fished in my pocket and dug up a dime, all I had besides the carfare home. "Let them go and get a loaf of bread," I said.

"It's not necessary," said Gene. "They can go without. They're used to it by now."

"Come on! I could stand a bit more myself, couldn't you?"

"But there's no butter or jam!"

"What's the difference? We'll eat it plain. I've done that before."

The kids ducked out to get the bread.

"Jesus," I said, "you really are down to nothing, aren't you?"

"This isn't bad, Henry," he said. "For a time, you know, we lived on weeds."

"No, don't tell me that! It's preposterous." I was almost angry with him. "Don't you know," I said, "that you don't have to starve? This country is lousy with food. Gene, I'd go out and beg before I'd eat weeds. Damn it, I never heard of such a thing."

"It's different with you, "said Gene. "You've knocked around. You've been out in the world. I haven't. I've lived like a squirrel in a cage... Except for that time I worked on the garbage scow."

"*What?* The *garbage* scow? What do you mean by that?"

"I mean just that, "said Gene calmly. "Hauling garbage to Barren Island. It was when my kids were living with my wife's parents for a time. I had the chance to do something different for a change... You remember Mr. Kiesling, the alderman, don't you? He got me the job. I enjoyed it too—while it lasted. Of course the smell was frightful, but you can get used to anything after a while. It paid eighty dollars a month, about twice what I earned in the pipe factory. It was fun too, sailing on into the bay, around the harbor, up and down the rivers. It was the first and only chance I ever had to get out into the world. Once we got lost at sea, during a storm. We drifted around for days. The worst of it was that we ran out of food. Yeah, we were forced to eat garbage. It was quite a wonderful experience. I must say I enjoyed it. Far better than being in a pipe factory. Even if there was a terrible stench..."

He paused a moment to savor it anew. His best days! Then suddenly he asked me if I had ever read Conrad, Joseph Conrad, who wrote about the sea.

I nodded my head.

"There's a writer I admire, Henry. If you could ever write a story like him, well..." He didn't know what to add to this. "My favorite is *The Nigger of the Narcissus.* I must have read it at least ten times. Each time it seems better to me."

"Yes, I know. I've read nearly all of Conrad. I agree with you, a wonderful writer... How about Dostoievsky, have you ever read him?"

No, he hadn't. Never heard the name before. What was he, a novelist? Sounded like a Polish name to him.

"I'll send you one of his books," I said. "It's called *The House of the Dead.* By the way," I added, "I have loads of books. I could send you anything you like, as many as you like. Just tell me what you'd enjoy."

He said not to bother, he liked reading the same books over and over.

"But wouldn't you care to know something about other writers too?"

He didn't think he had the energy to get interested in new writers. But his son, the big lad, he liked to read. Maybe I could send *him* something.

"What sort of books does he read?"

"He likes the moderns."

"Like whom?"

"Oh, Hall Caine, Rider Haggard, Henty..."

"I see. Sure," I said, " I can send him something interesting."

"Now the little fellow," said Gene, "he hardly reads at all. He's up on science. All he looks at are the scientific magazines. I think he's cut out to be a doctor. You should see the laboratory he's rigged up for himself. He's got everything in there, all cut up and bottled. It stinks in there. But if it makes him happy..."

"Exactly, Gene. *If it makes him happy.*"

I stayed on until the last bus. Walking down the dark, mangy street we hardly exchanged a word. As I shook hands with them all I repeated that I would be back soon. "We'll have a feast next time, eh kids?"

"Don't think of that, Henry," said Gene. "Just come... and bring you wife along too."

The ride home seemed interminable. I not only felt sad, I felt morose, despondent, licked. I couldn't wait to get home and switch on the lights. Once inside the Love Nest I would feel secure again. Never had it seemed more like a cosy womb, our wonderful little apartment. Truly, we lacked for nothing. If now and then we were hungry we knew it wouldn't last forever. We had friends—and we had the gift of speech. We knew how to forage. As for the world, the real world was right inside our four walls. Everything we wanted of the world we managed to drag to our lair. It's true, now and then I grew sensitive, or shy, when it came to making a touch of some one, but these moments were rare. In a pinch I could muster the courage to tackle an utter stranger. Certainly it was necessary to swallow one's pride. But I preferred to swallow my pride rather than my own spittle.

Borough Hall never looked better to me than when I stepped out of the subway. I was already home. The passers by wore a familiar air. They were not lost. Between the world I had just left and this one the difference was unthinkable. It was only the outskirts of the city, really, where Gene lived— but it was the wilderness to me. I shuddered to think that I might ever be condemned to such an existence.

An imperative desire to roam the streets for a while led me instinctively to Sackett Strett. Filled with memories of my old friend, Al Burger, I walked past his house. It looked sadly dilapidated. The entire street, houses and all, seemed to have diminished since my last visit. Everything was shrunk and shriveled. Despite all, it was still a wonderful street to me. The *Via Nostalgia.*

As for the suburbs, so sinister and forlorn—every one I knew who had gone to live in the suburbs had given up the ghost. The current of life never bathed these purlieus. There could be only one purpose in retiring to these living catacombs : to breed and wither away. If it were an act of renunciation it would be comprehensible, but it was never that. It was always an admission of defeat. Life became routine, the dullest sort of routine. A humdrum job, a family with a big bosom to slink into, the barnyard pets and their diseases, the slick magazines, the comic sheet, the farmer's almanac. Endless time in which to study oneself in the mirror. One after another, regular as the noon-day sun, the brats fell out of the womb. The rent came due regularly, too, or the interest on the mortgage. How pleasant to watch the new sewer pipes being laid! How thrilling to see new streets opening up and finally covered with asphalt! Everything was new. New and shoddy. New and desolate. New and meaningless. With the new came added comforts. Everything was planned for the coming generation. One was mortgaged to the shining future. A trip to the city and one longed to be back in the neat little bungalow with the lawn-mower and the washing machine. The city was disturbing, confusing, oppressive. One acquired a different rhythm living in the suburbs. What matter if one was not *au courant?* There were compensations—such as warm house slippers, the radio, the ironing board which sprang out of the wall. Even the plumbing was attractive.

Poor Gene, of course, had no such compensations. He had fresh air, and that was about all. True, his was not quite the suburbs. He was marooned in that in-between area, that no man's land where one kept body and soul together in some hapless way which defied all logic. The ever-expanding city was always threatening to gobble him up, land and all. Or, the tide might recede for some quixotic reason and leave them high and dry. Sometimes a city starts to move outward in a certain direction, then suddenly changes its mind. Any improvements begun are left unfinished. The little community begins slowly to die, for lack of oxygen. Everything deteriorates and depreciates. In this atmosphere one may just as well read the same books—or the same book—over and over again. Or play the same phonograph record. In a vacuum one has no need of new things, nor of excitement, nor of foreign stimuli. One has only to maintain a bare survival, to vegetate, like a fœtus in a jar.

I couldn't sleep that night for thinking of Gene. His plight was all the more disturbing to me for the reason that I had always regarded him as my twin brother. In him I always saw myself. We looked alike and we spoke alike. We had been born almost in the same house. His mother could well have been *my* mother : certainly I preferred her to my own. When he winced with pain, I winced. When he expressed a longing to do something, I felt the same longing. We were like a team in harness. I don't remember ever disputing with him, ever crossing him, ever insisting on doing something he did not want to do. What he owned was mine, and vice versa. Between us there was never the least jealousy or rivalry. We were one, body and soul... I saw in him now not the caricature of myself but rather a premonition of what was to come. If Fate could treat him so unkindly—my own brother who had never done any one any harm—what might it not have in store for me? The good that was in me was the overflow of his own bottomless well, of goodness ; the bad was my very own. The bad had accumulated as the result of our separation. When we parted ways I had lost that echo which I depended on for self-orientation. I had lost my touchstone.

All this was slowly dawning on me as I lay awake in bed. Never before had I entertained such thoughts about our relationship. But how clear it seemed to me now! I had lost my true brother. I had gone astray. I had willed myself to be other than him. And why? Because I would not go down before the world. I had pride. I simply would not admit defeat. But what did I want to *give?* I doubt if I ever thought of that, that there was something to give the world as well as to take from it. Boasting to every one that I was now a writer, as if that were the end all and the be all of existence. What a farce! I regretted that I had not lied to Gene. I should have told him I was a clerk in an office, a bank teller, anything but that I was a writer. It was like giving him a slap in the face.

How strange that years later his son—"the wild one", as he called him—should come to me with his manuscripts and ask my advice. Had I set off a spark that night which inflamed the son? As the father had predicted, the boy had gone West, had led the life of an adventurer, had become a hobo, in fact, and then, like the prodigal son, he had returned, had taken up this weird business of writing in order to earn a living. I had given him what help I could, had urged him to stop writing for the magazines and do something serious. And then I never heard from him again. Now and then, when I pick up a magazine, I look for his name. *Why don't I write him a letter?* I might at least inquire if his father is still alive. Perhaps I don't *want* to know what became of my cousin Gene. Perhaps it would frighten me, even to-day, to know the truth.

henry miller

(Reprinted from proofs of PLEXUS by kind permission of Olympia Press. *The complete work will be available at Paris booksellers in the early summer.)*

s. s. obersturmführer doktor mengele

The Journal of a Doctor deported to the Auschwitz Crematorium (Conclusion)

The Sonderkommando men seldom have any organic illnesses, for their beds and clothes are clean, their food is good, sometimes even excellent. Besides, they are all young men, hand-picked for their strength and good physical constitution. They have, on the other hand, a general tendancy to nervous diseases, for it is a tremendous strain on them to know that their brothers, their wives, their aged parents, their entire race is perishing here. Day after day they take thousands of corpses and drag them in front of the crematory ovens, where they load them with their own hands into the incineration cases. This causes acute nervous depression, and often neurasthenia. Everybody here has a past which he reflects upon with sorrow, and a future he contemplates darkly. The Sonder-kommando's future is inevitably circumscribed by time. Four years' painful experience has shown that its life span is four months. At the end of these four months, a company of SS appears. The entire Kommando is herded into the crematorium's rear courtyard. A machine-gun blast. Half an hour later a new Sonderkommando squad arrives. They undress their dead companions. An hour later only a heap of ashes remains. The initial job of every Sonderkommando is the incineration of his predecessor.

During my visits there is always someone who takes me aside and begs me to give him a swift sure poison. Inevitably I refuse. Today I'm sorry to have acted in this way. They are all dead. Their death was swift and sure, not self-administered as they might have preferred, but at the hands of their butchers.

After having crossed the threshold we reach an open place which resembles a courtyard, in the middle of which stands a thatched-root house whose plaster is peeling off. Its style is that of a typical German country house, and its small windows are covered with planks. As a matter of fact, it no doubt was a country house for at least 150 years, to judge by its thatched-roof, which has long since turned black, and its often replastered, flaking walls. The German State expropriated the entire village of Birken, near Auschwitz, for the purpose of establishing the KZ there. All the houses, with the exception of this one, have been demolished, and the population evacuated.

What, in fact, must this house have been used for? Was it meant to be lived in? In that case partitions must have divided the interior into rooms. Or was it originally one large room, without partitions, meant to be used as a hangar or storeroom? I ask myself these questions without being able to supply the answers. At any rate, it is now used as an undressing room for those on their way to the funeral pyre. It is here that they deposit their shabby clothes, their glasses, their shoes.

It is here that the "surplus" from the "Jewish ramp" are sent, tha tis, those for whom there is no room in the four crematoriums. The worst kind of death awaits them. Here there are no faucets to slake the thirst of several days' voyage. There are no fallacious signs to allay their misgivings, no gas chamber which they can pretend is a disinfecting room. Merely a peasant house, once painted yellow and covered with thatch, whose windows have been replaced by planks.

Behind the house enormous columns of smoke rise skyward, diffusing the odor of broiled flesh and burning hair. In the courtyard a terrified crowd of about 5,000 souls; on all sides thick cordons of SS, holding leashed police dogs. The prisoners are led, three or four hundred at a time, into the undressing room. There, hustled by a rain of truncheon blows, they spread out their clothes and leave by the door at the opposite side of the house, yielding their places to those who are to follow. Once out the door, they have no time even to glance around them or to realize the horror of their situation. A Sonderkommando immediately seizes their arms and steers them between the double row of SS who line the twisting path, which, flanked on either side by woods, runs for 50 yards to the pyre, which till now has been hidden by the trees.

The pyre is a ditch 50 yards long, 6 yards wide and 3 yards deep, a welter of burning bodies. SS soldiers, stationed at five yard intervals along the pathway side of the ditch, await their victims. They are holding small calibre arms—6 millimetres—used in the KZ for administering a bullet in the back of the neck. At the end of the pathway two Sonderkommando seize the victims by the arms and drag them for 15 or 20 yards into position before the SS. Their cries of terror cover the sound of the shots. Nothing but the click of a trigger is heard. Immediately afterwards, even before he is dead, the victim is hurled into the flames. Fifty yards farther on a scene similar in all respects is being enacted at full blast. Obersturmführer Molle is in charge of these butchers. As a Doctor and an eye witness I swear that he is the III Reich's most abject, diabolic and hardened assassin. Even Dr. Mengele shows from time to time that he is human. During the selections at the unloading ramp, should he notice a healthy young woman who above all wants to join her mother in the left-hand column, he snarls at her coarsely, but orders her to regain the right-hand group. Even the ace shot of the Number 1 crematorium, Obersturmführer Mussfeld, fires a second shot into anyone whom the first shot has not killed outright. Obersturmführer Molle wastes no time over such trifles. Here the majority of the men are thrown alive into the flames. Woe to any Sonderkommando by whose action the living chain, which extends from cloakroom to pyre, is broken with the result that one of the members of the firing squad is forced to wait for a few seconds before receiving his new victim.

Obersturmführer Molle is everywhere at once. He makes his way tirelessly from one pyre to the next, to the cloakroom and back again. Most of the time the deportees allow themselves to be led without resistance. So paralyzed are they with horror and fright that they no longer realize what is about to happen to them. The majority of the old and the children react in this way. There are however a goodly number of adolescents among those brought here, who instinctively try to resist, with a strength born of despair. If Molle happens to witness such a scene, he takes his gun from his ever-ready holster. A shot, a bullet often fired from a distance of 40 or 50 yards, and the person who was struggling falls dead in the arms of the Sonderkommando who was dragging him towards the pyre. Molle is an ace shot. His bullets have often pierced the arms of the Sonderkommando men from one side to the other when he has been dissatisfied with their work. In such cases he inevitably aims for the arms, without otherwise manifesting his dissatisfaction, but also without giving any previous warning.

When the two pyres are operating together, the output varies from five to six thousand dead a day. Slightly better than the crematoriums, but here death is a thousand times more terrible, for here one dies twice, first by a bullet in the back of the neck, then by fire.

After death by gas, by chloroform injections, and by a bullet in the back of the neck, I have now made my acquaintance with this fourth "combined" method.

I gather up the medicines and spectacles left behind by the victims. Dazed, my knees still shaking with emotion, I start for home, that is, for the Number 1 crematorium, which, to quote Dr. Mengele himself, "is no sanatorium, but a place where one can live in a pretty decent way". After having seen the pyres, I am inclined to agree with him.

Once home, I enter the room, but instead of arranging the medicines and spectacles, I take some "luminal" and go to bed. Today's dose is 30 centigrams, sufficient, I trust, to be effective against funeral pyre sickness.

The C camp, which is situated near the Czech camp, is composed of Hungarian Jewish women, often as many as 60,000 at a time, in spite of the daily transports to distant camps. It was in this heavily overpopulated camp that the doctors one day discovered among the inmates of one of the barracks the symptoms of scarlet fever. By Dr. Mengele's order that barracks, as well as those on either side of it, were quarantined. The quarantine lasted only a short time: from morning till evening, hardly twelve hours. At nightfall, trucks arrived to embark the inmates of these three barracks to the crematoriums. Such were the efficacious methods employed by Dr. Mengele to prevent the spread of contagious disease.

The Czech camp and C camp barracks had already felt the effects of Dr. Mengele's battle against the outbreak of epidemics. Fortunately the doctors assigned to these barracks quickly sized up Dr. Mengele's method for stemming contagion. And from then on they were careful not to reveal any cases of infectious diseases to the SS medical authorities. As often as was possible they went so far as to conceal the sick person in a corner of the barracks, and cared for him as best they could, with the meagre resources at their disposal. They avoided at all costs sending the sick person to the hospital, since the SS doctors checked all patients there and the appearance of a contagious disease meant the liquidation both of the barracks where the disease had originated and of the neighboring barracks as well. SS medical language calls this method "the intensive battle against the spread of infection". The results of that struggle are always one or two truckloads of ashes...

After such precedents, the bodies of two women are brought to me one morning from the B camp hospital. Dr. Mengele has sent them to me for autopsy. As usual I receive files at the same time which contain detailed medical information on the deceased. In the "diagnostic" column, I notice, respectively, the terms "typhoid fever" and "heart failure". The two mentions are followed by question marks.

I am not one usually given to pause and weigh the pro and con before acting. I decide quickly and act quickly, especially when it is a question of an important decision. The results are not always brilliant. The fact that I am here in the crematorium is the result of a snap decision.

Once again I make up my mind quickly. I shall not send Dr. Mengele, in the report on my autopsy, a diagnosis of typhoid fever. The description of the victim's illness is full of loopholes. The diagnosis is accompanied by a question mark. The doctor is unsure of himself in the matter. The autopsy will determine the validity of his judgment. That is why the two bodies have been sent to me.

I perform the autopsy. The small intestine in both bodies is in an ulcerous state characteristic of three week old typhoid. The spleen is also swollen. Beyond all shadow of a doubt, both are cases of typhoid fever.

Dr. Mengele arrives as usual about five o'clock in the afternoon. He is in good humour. He comes over and questions me, full of curiosity as to the results of my autopsy. The two bodies are lying open on the table. The large and small intestines, as well as the spleen from both bodies, are washed and placed in a container, ready to be examined.

I give him my diagnosis: inflamation of the small intestine with extensive ulceration. I expound for Dr. Mengele's benefit the ulcerated state of the small intestine during the third week of typhoid fever, and compare it to the ulcerations which arise during inflamation of the same organ. I draw his attention to the fact that the swelling of the spleen often accompanies inflamation of the intestine, and that as a consequence it is not a question of typhoid fever, but a serious inflamation of the small intestine probably caused by intoxication due to meat.

Dr. Mengele is a race biologist and not a pathologist. It was not difficult to convince him that my diagnosis was correct. However, to be mistaken annoys him. Turning towards me he says that in his opinion doctors who are guilty of such crass errors would be more useful to the KZ as road-workers than as hospital physicians making poor diagnoses, as a result of which patients who might otherwise have been saved, die.

He takes the affadavits and files and before putting them into his briefcase, adds a note in the margin: "make the women doctors responsible", I read over his shoulder. I sincerely regret having so wronged my innocent female colleagues, for their diagnosis was excellent. Perhaps they will now lose their jobs and end up performing heavy labor. If Dr. Mengele carries out his threat, I shall have been the cause of it.

According to medical customs as practiced outside the barbed wire, I have certainly acted wrongly. I recognize my guilt. I worsened the situation by 2 or 3 persons. But to what limits might Dr. Mengele have gone in his fight against epidemics, and what might have been the number of victims if I had not acted thus?

The next day I received comforting news concerning my colleagues. Dr. Mengele reprimanded them, but did nothing more about it. They stayed on in their jobs. Many bodies have since reached me, accompanied by their medical records, but the diagnosis column was never filled out. I preferred it so. Dr. Mengele's indignation concerning the error in diagnosis has nevertheless continued to prey on my mind for several days. To find so much cynicism mixed with so much evil in a doctor surprises me, even in the KZ. He is no ordinary doctor, but a criminologist, or rather, a criminal doctor: "Kriminal doktor".

In the Number 1 crematorium's gas chamber, 1,300 dead are piled up. The Sonderkommando men have already begun to untangle the lattice of flesh. The noise of the elevators and the sound of their clanging doors reaches my room. The work moves ahead double-time. The gas chamber must be cleared, for the arrival of a new convoy is annonced. The chief of the gas chamber kommando squad almost rips the door of my room off its hinges as he arrives to tell me that during the untangling of the corpses, a girl was discovered alive at the bottom of the pile.

I grab my instrument case which is always ready, and dash immediately to the gas chamber. Against the wall near the entrance of the immense room, half-covered with other bodies, I see a woman in the throes of a death-rattle, the body seized with convulsions. The gas Kommando men around me are in a state of panic. Nothing like this has ever happened in the course of their horrible career. We remove the still living body from the corpses which are pressing against it. I gather this tiny adolescent body into my arms and carry it back into the room adjoining the gas chamber, where normally the gas Kommando men change clothes for work. I lay the body down on a bench. A frail young girl, almost a child, she can be no more than fifteen. I bring out my syringe and taking her arm—she has not yet recovered consciousness and is breathing with difficulty—I administer three intravenous injections. My companions cover her body, which is cold as ice, with a heavy overcoat. One runs to the kitchen to fetch some tea and warm broth. Everybody wants to help, as though she were his own child. The reaction is swift. The child is seized by a fit of coughing, which brings a thick globule of phlegm up from her lungs. She opens her eyes and looks fixedly at the ceiling. I keep a close watch for every sign of life. Her breathing becomes deeper and more and more regular. Her lungs, tortured by the gas, inhale the fresh air avidly. Her pulse begins to become perceptible, the result of the injections. I wait impatiently. The injections have not yet been completely absorbed, but I see that within a few minutes she is going to regain consciousness. Indeed, her circulation begins to bring color back into her cheeks and her delicate face becomes human again. She looks around her with astonishment, and glances at us. She does not yet realize what is happening to her. She is still incapable of distinguishing the present, of knowing whether she is dreaming or really awake. A veil of mist clouds her consciousness. Perhaps she vaguely remembers a train, the long file of box-cars which brought her here. Then she was lined up and, before she knew what was happening, was swept along by the current of the mass into a large, brilliantly lighted underground room. Everything happened so quickly. She recalls perhaps that everybody had to undress. The impression was disagreeable, but everybody yielded resignedly to the order; nobody was able to get out of it. And so, naked, she was swept along into another room. Mute anguish seized them all. The second room was also lighted by powerful lamps. Completely bewildered, she lets her gaze wander over the mass huddled together there, but finds none of her family. Pressed close against the wall, she waits, her heart frozen, for what is going to happen. All of a sudden the lights go out, leaving her enveloped in total darkness. Something stings her eyes, seizes her throat, suffocates her. She faints. There her memories cease.

Her movements are becoming more and more animated. She tries to move her feet, her hands, to turn her head left and right. Her face is seized by a fit of convulsions. Suddenly she grasps my coat collar and grips it convulsively, trying with all her might to raise herself. I lay her back down again several times, but she continues to repeat the same gesture. Little by little, however, she grows calm and remains stretched out, completely exhausted. Large tears shine in her eyes and roll down her cheeks. She is not crying. I receive the first reply to my questions. Not wanting to tire her, I ask her only a few. I learn that she is 16 years old, and that she has come in a convoy from Transylvania, in company with her parents.

They give her a bowl of hot broth which she drinks voraciously. The Sonderkommando men bring her all sorts of dishes, but I cannot allow them to give her anything. I cover her to her head and tell her that she should try to get some sleep.

My thoughts move at a dizzy pace. I turn towards my companions in the hope of finding a solution... We rack our brains, for we are now face to face with the most difficult problem: what to do with the girl now that she has been brought back to life? We know that she can't remain here for very long.

What can one do with a young girl in the crematorium's Sonderkommando? I know the crematorium's past history: no one has ever come out of here alive, either from the convoys or from the Sonderkommando, of which ours is number 12.

Little time remains for reflection. Oberschaarführer Mussfeld arrives to supervise the work, as is his wont. Passing by the open door of our room, he sees us gathered in a group. He comes in and asks what is going on. Even before we tell him, he has already noticed the girl stretched out on the bench. I signal to my companions to withdraw. I'm going to attempt something I know a priori doomed to failure.

Three months in the same camp, and in the same milieu has created, in spite of everything, a certain intimacy between us. Besides, the Germans generally appreciate capable people, and as long as they have need of them, respect them to a certain extent, event in the KZ. Such is the case for cobblers, tailors, joiners and locksmiths. From our numerous contacts, I have been able to ascertain that Obersturmführer Mussfeld has a high esteem for the medical expert's professional qualities. He knows that my superior is Dr. Mengele, the KZ's most dreaded figure, who, goaded by racial pride, takes himself to be one of the most important representatives of German medical science. He considers the dispatch of hundreds of thousands of Jews to the gas chambers as a patriotic duty. The work which is carried out in the dissecting room is for the furtherance of German medical science. As Dr. Mengele's pathological expert, I also have a hand in this progress, and therein lies the explanation of a certain form of respect that he pays me. He often comes to see me in the dissecting room, and we converse on politics, the military situation, and various other subjects. It would appear that his respect also arises from the fact that he considers the dissection of bodies and his bloody job of killing to be allied activities. He is the commandant and ace shot of the Number 1 crematorium. Three other SS act as his lieutenants. Together they carry out the "liquidation" by a bullet in the back of the neck. This type of death is reserved for those who were chosen in the camp, or else sent from another on their way to a so-called "rest camp". When there are merely 500 or less, they are killed by a bullet in the back of the neck, for the large factory of gas chambers is reserved for the annihilation of more important numbers. As much gas is needed to kill 500 as to kill 3,000. Nor is it worthwhile to call out the Red Cross Truck to bring the cannisters and gas butchers for such a trifling number of victims. Nor is it worth the trouble of having a truck come to collect the clothes, which are scarcely more than rags. Such are the factors which decide whether a group shall die by gas or by a bullet in the back of the neck.

I calmly relate the terrible case of the young girl to the *Ober*. I describe for his benefit what pains the child must have suffered in the undressing room, and the horrible scenes which precede death in the gas chambers. When the room was plunged into darkness, she breathed in a few lungsful of cyclon gas. Only a few, for her fragile body gave way under the pushing and shoving of the mass as they fought against death. By chance she fell with her face against the wet concrete floor. That bit of humidity kept her from being asphyxiated, for cyclon gas does not react under humid conditions.

These are my arguments, and I ask him to do something for the child. He listens to me attentively, then asks me what I intend doing about it. I feel, and I see by his expression, that I have put him face to face with a difficult problem. The child cannot remain here in the crematorium. One solution would be to put her in front of the crematorium gate. A kommando of women navvies always works there. She could slip in amongst the women of the kommando and accompany them back to the camp barracks when they go. She would never relate what had happened to her. The presence of one new face among so many thousands would never be detected, for no one in the camp knows all the other inmates.

If she were three or four years older, that might work. A girl of twenty would be able to recognize clearly the miraculous circumstances of her survival, and have enough foresight not to tell anyone about them. She would wait for better times, like so many other thousands are waiting, to recount what she has lived through. But Mussfeld thinks that a young girl of sixteen will in all naïveté tell the first person she meets where she has just come from, what she has seen and what she has lived through. The news will spread like wildfire, and we'll all be forced to pay for it with our lives.

"There's no way of getting round it," he says, " the child cannot remain alive. " From the crematorium's point of view, I must admit that he's right.

Half an hour later the young girl was led, or rather carried, into the furnace room hallway, and there Mussfeld sent another in his place to do the job. A bullet in the back of the neck.

In the packages that have been sent, one finds tea, coffee, chocolate, canned goods by the hundredweight. All these goods can be procured in the undressing room. These unlimited possibilites gave the Ober the idea of having a *recamier* constructed and sent to his home.

While present at the construction of the *recamier*, an idea begins to take shape in my mind. Little by little the idea transforms itself into a project. In a few weeks the Sonderkommando will be a thing of the past. We shall all perish here, and we are well aware of it. We've already grown accustomed to the idea, for we know there is no way out. One thing, however, upsets me. Eleven Sonderkommando squads have perished and taken with them the terrible secret of the crematorium and its butchers. Even though we don't survive, it is our duty to make certain that the world learns of the cruelty and sordidness—unimaginable for a normal mind—of a people who pretend to be superior.

It is necessary that a message addressed to the world leave this place. Whether it is soon discovered, or years later, it will still be a terrible manifesto of accusation. This message will be signed by all 200 men of the Number 1 crematorium's Sonderkommando, fully conscious of their impending death. It will be carried beyond the barbed wire barriers of the KZ by the *recamier*, and for the time being will remain at Obersturmführer Mussfeld's home at Mannheim.

The message was drafted in time. It described in sufficient detail the horrors carried out here during these last years. The names of the camp's torturers are included in it. We publish the approximate number of people exterminated, with a description of the ways, the methods and the instruments utilized for extermination.

The message was drawn up on three large sheets of parchement. The Sonderkommando's editor—a painter from Paris—copied it in beautifully written letters, as was the custom with ancient parchments, using India ink so that the writing would not fade. The fourth sheet contained the signatures of the Sonderkommando's 200 men. The sheets were tied together with a silk thread, then rolled up, enclosed in a specially constructed cylindrical box made of zinc by one of our tinsmiths, and finally sealed and soldered so as to be protected from air and humidity. Our joiners placed the box between the *recamier's* springs, in the wool floss of the upholstering.

Another message, exactly the same, was buried in the courtyard of the Number 2 crematorium.

I had become used to seeing a truck enter the crematorium gate every evening about 7 o'clock, carrying 70 to 80 men and women on their way to be liquidated. Coming from the barracks hospital, they represented the KZ's daily selection. Prisoners for several years, or at least for several months, they are therefore fully aware of the fate in store for them. When the truck enters, the courtyard resounds with horrible screams and the cries of the damned. They know that at the foot of the crematorium's ovens all hope of escape dissolves. Not wanting to be a witness to that daily scene, I generally withdraw to the most remote corner of the crematorium courtyard, where I sit down under a little arbor of pines. The crackling of the revolvers and the screams are deadened by the time they reach me.

This evening my luck runs out. From 5 o'clock on I work in the dissecting room. I have to examine the suicide case of an SS Obersturmführer whose body was sent me from Glaiwitz. An SS captain—one of the court martial judges—and a clerk sit in on the dissection. About 7 o'clock whilst I was dictating the affidavit to the SS clerk, the heavy, prisoner-loaded truck entered the courtyard. Two windows, barred and covered with metal mosquito netting, look out on the crematorium's back courtyard. All the occupants are extremely calm. From this I deduce that they have been selected not out of the barracks, but from the hospitals. They are all seriously ill. They haven't the strength to scream, nor even to climb down from the raised platform on the truck. The SS guards begin to shout, become excited, exhort them to get down. No one moves. The driver also begins to lose patience. He climbs back in behind the steering wheel and starts the motor. But the truck does not pull away. Little by little the truck's immense dump begins to rise, until suddenly it spills its occupants to the ground. Already half dead, they fall, bumping each other, striking their heads, their faces, their knees against the concrete. A horrible cry of pain bursts forth as they writhe convulsively on the ground.

The scene is terrible to see. The SS court martial judge, drawn by the moans and the cries of pain, interrupts his investigations to ask me, "What's going on in the courtyard?" He comes over to the window, where I explain to him just what is happening. Apparently he is not used to such scenes, for he turns his head away and remarks disapprovingly, "Nevertheless, they shouldn't do that".

The Sonderkommando strip them of their clothes and pile them in the courtyard. The victims are led into the incineration rooms and put in front of Obersturmführer's revolver barrel. He is today's killer on duty. Standing near the ovens, wearing rubber gloves, he holds his weapon with a steady hand. One by one the bodies fall, each yielding his place to the next in line. Within a few minutes he has "tumbled"—that's the term in general usage here—the eighty men. Half an hour later they have all been incinerated.

Later the Obersturmführer pays a visit to my room and asks me to examine him. He suffers from heart trouble and head aches. I check his blood pressure, take his pulse, listen to his heart with a stethoscope. His pulse rate is slightly high. I give him my opinion: this state is no doubt the result of the little job he has just performed in the furnace room. I wanted to reassure him, but the result was just the opposite. Indignant, he gets up and replies, "Your diagnosis is wrong. It doesn't upset me any more to kill 100 men than it does to kill 80. If I'm upset, it's merely because I drink too much." And he moves away, highly displeased.

I am in the habit of reading for a while in bed each night before I go to sleep. That's what I'm doing again this evening, but not for long. Suddenly the lights go out and I hear the KZ alarm siren. In such cases we are taken, convoyed by well-armed SS guards, to the Sonderkommando shelter, that is, to the gas chamber. We cross the threshold of the gas chamber with heavy hearts. All the kommando is here, 200 strong. It is a terrible feeling to remain in this room knowing that hundreds of thousands of people have met a frightful end here. Besides, we know that the life of the Sonderkommando is drawing to a close. This being the case, the SS could very easily close the gas chamber doors and dump four cases of cyclon gas down the chimneys to liquidate us all.

As a matter of fact, such action would not be without precedent. A part of the number eleven Sonderkommando was transferred from the D quarter to barracks 13, a restricted area. The Kommando was informed that, upon orders from above, the group would no longer live in the crematoriums, but henceforth in this barracks. They would continue to work at the ovens, however, going in two separate groups from the barracks to the crematorium. That same evening they were taken to the "D" quarter for a bath and a change of clothing. After the bath they were pushed into a neighboring room to get disinfected clothes. This room was a real disinfecting chamber, and as such could be sealed hermetically. Normally that's where the lousefilled clothes collected in the camp are disinfected. Four hundred men from the Sonderkommando were liquidated in this manner. Trucks took their bodies thence to the funeral pyres.

Thus the anxiety we feel while waiting for the alert to be over is not unfounded. The alert has lasted three hours. We come up out of darkness to see the long kilometres of barbed wire once again lighted by the search lights. We return to bed. I try to go to sleep, but sleep is slow in coming.

Only a few days ago I was sitting with Obersturmführer Dr. Mengele in the work room, near the table. We were looking through the records already set up on twins, when he notices a faint spot of grease on the bright blue cover of one of the files. I often handle the records in the course of my dissections, and so may well have spotted it with a bit of grease. Dr. Mengele looks at me disapprovingly and says, very seriously, "How could you be so careless with these files, which I have compiled with so much love!" The word Love has just left Dr Mengele's lips. I am so taken aback that I don't know what to reply.

Once, when I was dissecting the body of a fairly old man, I discovered some very beautiful gallstones in the bladder. Knowing that Dr. Mengele was an ardent collector of such items, I washed the stones, dried them, and then arranged them in a large necked flask, stopped with a glass cork. I stuck a label on the flask giving the person's name, the kind of stones they were, and their pathological characteristics. During his visit next day, I gave them to Dr. Mengele. He admired the beautiful crystals. Turning the flask round and round, he looks at the gallstones and then, turning abruptly to me, asks if I know the ballad of the warrior Wallenstein. His question is completely out of keeping with the surroundings, but I answer, "I know the story of the warrior Wallenstein, but not the ballad." Thereupon, smiling, he begins to recite:

Im Besitze der Familie Wallenstein
Ist mehr Gallenstein, wie Edelstein

which, translated into English, would be something like:

In the Wallenstein family
There are more gallstones than precious stones

My superior recited several stanzas of that comic ballad. He was in such a good mood that I decided to ask a great favor of him: that he let me meet my wife and child. Only after I had uttered the request did I realize how daring it was: but it was already too late. He looked at me with astonishment. "You're married and have a child?" "Yes, Captain, I'm married and have a daughter 15 years old," I tell him in a voice quivering with emotion. "Do you think they are still here?" "Yes, Captain, because at our arrival three months ago you selected them and sent them to the right hand column." "They may have since been sent on to another camp," he says. Suddenly I think of the crematorium smoke: perhaps they've since been dispatched with that smoke to some celestial kommando. Dr. Mengele, seated, his head bent forward, seems lost in thought. I remain standing behind him. "I'm going to give you a pass to go look for them, but..." and placing his index finger on his lips, he looks at me menacingly. "I understand, Captain, and thank you."

Dr. Mengele leaves. I return to my room, completely elated, holding the pass in my hand. Once there I begin to read it: "Number A 8450 is authorized to circulate freely within the confines of the Auschwitz KZ. Signed: Dr. Mengele, SS Hauptsturmführer." Never has anything like this happened in the history of the camp. Never has a prisoner of the KZ been authorized to hunt for his family, to enter unguarded the women's camp. I don't know quite where to begin. The women are in the C, B3 and FK4 camps. As far as I know, most of the Hungarian women are in C camp, sometimes as many as 50,000. That's where I'll try first.

The following day I get up unrefreshed, not having slept a wink all night. Terrible doubts assail me. Here, where even an hour is long, three months is an eternity. During that time so many things might have happened. And I am in a good position to know just what goes on here every hour of every day.

I enter the SS office to announce my departure. I bid good-bye to my comrades, who wish me good luck. It is early in the morning, but already the white August sun is scorching hot when I set out on my three kilometre journey. As the crow flies, C camp is considerably closer, but I must keep within the fences, and am therefore obliged to make numerous detours. I set out through the neutral zone, bordered by electrified fences, filled with a mixture of dread and curiosity. They don't fire on you without warning when you pass through the maze of wires. Motorcycle patrols ride by with signs hung round their necks reading, "Lagerpolizei", "Camp Police". I meet several of them on my way, but none molest me. Reaching C camp, I see an immense iron gate, whose two wings bear numerous porcelain insulators reinforced by barbed wire, looming above me. In front of the gate the inevitable guard house. Some SS soldiers are basking in the sun. They look me up and down, for I am an unusual guest, but say nothing. They don't bother about business which concerns their comrade seated near the guardhouse window. I approach the latter and give him my tatoo number. He looks at me questioningly. I take Dr. Mengele's pass from my pocket and hand it to him. After reading it, he orders his comrades to open the gates. He asks me how long I plan to remain, since he has to record it in the books, as the rules prescribe. "Until noon," I tell him. Two hours is a great deal to ask, but a package of cigarettes is also a good pass in each KZ quarter. I hand him a pack and cross the threshold.

The main road of C camp, bordered by faded green barracks, is animated. A women's detail is carrying a large iron cask filled with hot soup. Here the noon meal is distributed at 10 o'clock. Another group—a highway kommando—is carrying stones for repairing the road. Several women are stretched out in the sun along both sides of the road. Their bodies rolled in rags, their heads shaven, they are pitiful to behold. Most, dressed in fantastic clothing, often sleeveless evening gowns, are lying on the ground delousing themselves or their companions. The exposed parts of their bodies are covered with foul, oozing sores. Here are chosen the convoys to be sent to camps farther off. As far as I can tell, the selection was very carefully made, for all those here appear to be the very weakest. Lucky are they who have been sent to more remote camps, for they have a chance of surviving, whereas the fate of those who are here is sealed, as was the case for the inmates of the Czech and gypsy camps.

I head towards the first barracks. From all sides cries and shouts greet me. Those who were apparently mere bundles of rags, dragging along the ground, revive and, leaving their places, come towards me. About thirty of them recognize me, and ask anxiously for news of their husbands and children.

If they have recognized me, it is because I have managed to retain a human appearance. But it is almost impossible for me to recognize them. My situation in the middle of the crowd becomes embarrassing. In ever increasing numbers they crowd around me. Everybody wants to learn something about his family. For three months they have been living under an impossible regime and in continual terror. The selection takes place once a week. Three months has been long enough for them to have learned to regret the past and to fear the future. The women ask me if everything they've heard about the crematorium is true. What is the smoke you see during the day pouring from the chimneys, and the flame that replaces it by night? I try to reassure them, denying everything. "It's not true. Besides, the war is almost over and we'll all soon be back home." I tell them that even though I don't believe it myself. I leave them without having learned any news of my wife and daughter.

I enter the first barracks and ask the overseer, a young Slovakian girl, to have the names of my wife and daughter called out. There are between 800 and 1,000 women stacked one above the other on the superimposed berths that line the walls of every barracks. To have the names called out here is not easy. The noise of the thousand women drowns the single voice. The overseer returns a few minutes later to tell me that her search has proved fruitless. I thank her for her kindness and enter the second barracks.

Here the situation is much the same, the same scene is repeated with like results. I am in the third barracks, standing in the middle of the room. I have the overseer called and ask her, as I had done before, to have my wife and daughter sent for. She sends two little girls down each side of the barracks, who stop at each layer of bunks and call out the names. In a few minutes they return, bringing my wife and daughter with them.

They approach hand in hand, their eyes wide with fear, knowing the probable consequences of a personal summons. But they've already recognized me. They stop dead, astonished, rooted to the spot. I approach them, take both of them in my arms, and embrace them. They are incapable of speaking, but are satisfied to cry softly. I try to console them, to reassure them, but already the crowd surrounds us. Under such conditions there is absolutely no way of holding a conversation. I ask the overseer if she'll let us have the use of her little room for a few minutes. At last, here we are alone.

They bring me up to date on their sad experiences of the past three months: the dreaded selections, from which they have until now escaped, but the very thought of which makes them tremble with fear, living as they do in the shadow of the crematorium chimneys. In rags, they suffer from the cold and perpetual hunger. It rains in their barracks and their clothes never dry out completely. The food is unedible and what is worse, they are unable to sleep. The place assigned to them was meant to hold seven people: twelve are stacked in there. Women whose social rank back home was fairly high push and shove each other in order to give themselves a few centimetres more space, thus hoping to sleep better, even though it be at the expense of their companions. Everybody here has lost her former personality. Friends or strangers, each is concerned only about her own well-being, unwilling to make the slightest concession. My daughter tells me that she sleeps on the concrete floor, since nobody will make a place for her on the bunk where her mother sleeps. My wife asks me about my work. I explain to her that I am Dr. Mengele's assistant, and as such a member of the Sonderkommando. After three month's of KZ life they too have learned that the Sonder is the kommando of the living dead. Both look at me aghast. I reassure them as best I can and promise to come back the following day.

The fact that I have found my wife and child made sensational news at the crematorium. I took warm clothing, linen and stockings from the clothing department, toothbrushes, nail cutters, penknives and combs from the toilet article section. From the pharmacy I got a stock of vitamin pills, ointment for their sores, and anything I thought might be useful. I got a sizeable quantity, much more than was necessary for my wife and daughter. Besides, I filled my sack with blocks of sugar, butter, jam and bread in quantities large enough to be able to distribute them to the other prisoners. So it was that I left for the C camp with my sack bulging. But all good things must come to an end.

For three weeks now I have been visiting C camp every day. One day, what I was afraid would happen, did. I had already come to the conclusion, after the liquidation of the Czech and gypsy camps, that extermination is merely a matter of chronological order. Sooner or later the time comes for all those who spend their days of misery within the Auschwitz barbed wire barriers.

One afternoon I am seated at my work table in the laboratory. Dr. Mengele and Dr. Thilo are present. They are discussing questions pertaining to the KZ's administration. Dr. Mengele, as though he had just reached a decision, gets up from his chair and says to Dr. Thilo: "I am no longer able to feed the debilitated prisoners of C camp. I shall have them liquidated during the next two weeks."

Such scenes often take place in my presence. Affairs of a most confidential nature are discussed as though I were not even there. Am I not after all a living dead man, whose presence no longer means anything?

I am deeply shaken by Dr. Mengele's decision concerning the liquidation of C camp, for it concerns not only my immediate family, but thousands of my unfortunate compatriots. I must act immediately.

As soon as Doctors Mengele and Thilo leave the crematorium, I follow them and head directly for D camp, where the SS group which supervises the incorporation of foreign prisoners into forced labor battalions is installed. In this camp the prisoners necessary for that program of slave labor in force throughout all Germany are portioned out. The head is an Obersturmführer. I find him alone in his room. I introduce myself and show him Dr. Mengele's pass.

I explain to him that my wife and child are interned in C camp. After having tracked them down with Dr. Mengele's help, I have been doing all I can for them. Nevertheless, I know C camp's predestined future, and so judge it both wise and urgent that they be sent to some place far from here. He is of exactly the same opinion and promises to help me.

This week two convoys of 3,000 prisoners will be sent from C camp to western Germany's war plants. These factories are the best set-up, he says, since the lodging and food do not aim at exterminating but rather at the maintenance of good conditions for the workers, in order to assure maximum productivity. I leave a box of 100 cigarettes on the Obersturmführer's table.

He accepts the package and promises that if my wife and daughter volunteer during the selection, he will assign them to one of the two convoys. I have obtained what I wanted. I hurry to C camp, but there my job is even more difficult. I have to make my family understand that they must get away from here. I can't tell them the truth, for I would only start a panic, which would be fatal for all of us. I ask for my wife and daughter in the overseer's little room, and try to make them understand that, although it is painful for me, the situation demands that they leave. They must renounce my help. For my part I too must forego the pleasure of seeing and helping them. Sometime this week there will be a selection to fill a convoy quota. They must volunteer for one of the convoys, preferably for the first. I have explained to my wife that serious motives force me to advise her to act thus, and I ask her to tell all her acquaintances to volunteer as well for the convoys, and that she say nothing more about it. I might add that during the filling of work quotas, the SS commission first accepts volunteers for the convoys, and only uses arbitrary incorporation when the number of volunteers does not attain the number required. Nevertheless, there are few volunteers, since nobody wants to forsake the advantages of his present situation—that of not working—for another. Few are they who are willing to volunteer for forced labor when the food rations are insufficient even to sustain the life of the quarantine camp. Poor short sighted women, if only they understood the mentality of the Third Reich's KZ, they would realize that those who don't work don't live.

At the arrival of a convoy, Dr. Mengele espied, among those lined up for selection, a hunchbacked man about 50 years old. The cripple was not alone. Standing beside him was a fifteen or sixteen year old boy, tall and handsome. The latter, however, had a deformed right foot, which had been corrected by an apparatus made of metal plates and orthopedic, thick soled shoes. They were father and son.

Dr. Mengele thinks he has discovered a sovereign example, in the person of the hunchback father and his lame son, to lend weight to his theory of the Jewish race's degeneracy. He has them fall out of ranks immediately. He takes his notebook, inscribes something in it, and entrusts the two wretches to the care of an SS non-commissioned officer, who takes them to the Number 1 crematorium.

It is around noon. The Number 1 crematorium is not working today. Having nothing to do for the moment, I am in my room idling away my time. The SS soldier on duty comes in search of me and asks me to go to the gate. The father and son, accompanied by the SS guard, are already there. I take the message sent me, which reads: "Dissecting room, Number 1 crematorium: that these two men be examined from a clinical point of view. That exact measurements of the two men be made; that clinical records be set up including all interesting details, and most especially those relative to causes which provoked the bodily deformities."

A second note is enclosed for Obersturmführer Mussfeld. Without even reading it I know what it says. I entrust it for transmission to a Sonder man.

Father and son—their faces wan from their miserable years in the Litzmannstadt ghetto—filled with forebodings, but anxious, look at me questioningly. I take them across the courtyard, which at this hour of the day is filled with sunlight. On our way to the dissecting room I reassure them with a few well chosen words. Luckily there are no corpses on the dissecting table; for them it would have been a horrible sight to come upon.

To spare them I decide not to conduct the examination in the austere dissecting room, which reeks with the odor of formaldehyde, but in the pleasant, well-lighted study hall. From our conversation I learn that the father was a respected citizen of Litzmannstadt, a wholesaler in tissues. During the years of peace he had often taken his son with him on his business trips to Vienna to have him examined and treated by the most famous specialists.

I first examine the father in detail, omitting nothing. The deviation of his spinal column is the result of retarded rickets. In spite of a most detailed examination, I discover no symptom of any other illness.

I try to console him by saying that he will probably be sent to a work camp.

Before proceeding to the examination of the son, I converse with him at some length. He has a pleasant face, an intelligent look, but his morale is badly shaken. Trembling with fear, he relates in an expressionless voice the sad, painful, sometimes terrible events which marked his five years in the ghetto. His mother, a frail and sensitive creature, was not long able to endure the ordeals which befell her. She became melancholic and depressed. For weeks at a time she ate hardly at all, so that her husband and son might have a little more food. A true wife and Jewish mother, who loved her own to the point of madness, she died a martyr during the first year of their life in the ghetto. So it was that they lived in the ghetto, the father without his wife, the son without his mother.

And now they are in the Number 1 crematorium. What a horrible drama of our existence as Jews. I am the Jewish doctor who must examine them with exact clinical methods before they die, and I must then perform the dissection on their still warm bodies. So shaken am I by the terrible irony of our destiny as Jews, completely powerless to do anything at all about it, I feel my nerves stretched to the breaking point.

...I examine the boy. On his right foot I notice a congenital deformity, with some of the muscles lacking.

The scientific name for this deformity is: hypomelia. I can see that extremely expert hands have practised several operations on him, but as a result his foot has become shorter. But with a bandage and orthopdic socks he can walk perfectly well. I see no other deformity to be indicated.

I ask them if they want something to eat. They are very hungry, they tell me. I call a man from the Sonderkommando and have some food brought for them. They immediately receive a plate of fried beef with macaroni, a dish not to be found outside the confines of the Sonderkommando. They begin to eat ravenously. They don't know it, but for them this is their "Last Supper".

Scarcely half an hour later Obersturmführer Mussfeld appears with four Sonderkommando men. They take the two men into the furnace room and have them undress. Then the Oberschaarfhürer's revolver cracks twice. Father and son are stretched out on the concrete, covered with blood, dead. Obersturmführer Mussfeld has faithfully carried out Dr. Mengele's orders. Now it is my turn again. The two bodies are brought into the dissecting room. So sickened am I by these horrors that I entrust the dissection to two of my colleagues and take care of the affidavit. The dissection reveals nothing more than I had previously ascertained in my *in vivo* examination. The cases are banal, but nevertheless can very easily be utilized as propaganda in support of the theory concerning the degeneracy of the Jewish race.

Late in the afternoon, after already having sent at least 10,000 men to their death, Dr. Mengele arrives. He listens interestedly to my report concerning both the *in vivo* and *post mortem* observations made on the two victims.

"These bodies must not be incinerated," he says, "They must be prepared and their skeletons sent to the Anthropological Museum in Berlin."

What systems do I know of for the preparation of skeletons? he asks me. I reply that there are two methods. One consists of immersing the bodies in a lime chloride, which after two weeks consumes all the soft parts of the bodies. Then the bodies are immersed in a gasoline bath, which dissolves all the fat and makes the skeleton dry, inodorous and white. The second method is by cooking. This consists merely of boiling the bodies in water until the flesh can easily be stripped from the bones. Then the same gasoline bath is applied.

Dr. Mengele orders me to use the quickest method, by cooking.

In the KZ orders are always cursory. How the prisoners should go about procuring the materials necessary for their execution is not specified. The order must be carried out, and that is as much as is known. I am therefore faced with a problem to resolve: in what shall I have the bodies cooked? I put the question to Obersturmführer Mussfeld. I tell him that I have two bodies that must be cooked, but that I haven't got... Even he is horrified by my tale. He thinks for a minute, then remembers that there are two iron casks in the courtyard which are generally used in the storehouse.

He puts them at my disposal and advises me to place the casks on bricks in the courtyard and to light an open fire beneath them. The two Sonder men busy themselves gathering wood and keeping the fire hot. At the end of five hours, I realize that the soft parts are now easily seperable from the bones. I order the fire to be put out, but the casks have to stay here until they grow cold.

Having nothing else to do, I remain seated beneath a little arbour not far from the casks. A heavy silence surrounds me. Some prisoner-masons are in the process of repairing the chimneys. Dusk is falling. The casks should be cold by now, and I am just about to go have them emptied when one of my men comes running up to me excitedly and says, "Doctor, the Poles are eating the meat in the casks!" I run as fast as my legs will carry me. Four foreign prisoners, dressed in striped jerkins, are standing around the casks, struck dumb. They are the Polish masons who, after having finished their work, were waiting for their guards to come take them back to Auschwitz Number 1. Starved, they were scrounging for some food in the courtyard, and by chance came upon the casks, which had been left unguarded for a few minutes. They thought that it was the Sonderkommando meat which was being cooked. They sniffed at it, then fetched up some pieces of flesh which was not covered with skin, and taking out their knives, began to eat it.

They didn't get very far, however, for the two Sonder men who were supposed to supervise the cooking and watch the casks, having seen what was happening, hurried back. The Poles were almost paralyzed with terror when they learned what kind of meat it was they had been eating.

After the gasoline bath, the laboratory attendant very competently gathers up the bones of the skeletons, which he places on the same work room table where the evening before I had examined the still living men.

Dr. Mengele is very pleased. He has brought several fellow officers with him. Together they examine pompously certain parts of the skeletons. They launch high sounding scientific terms, talking as if the two victims were an extremely rare medical phenomenon. They abandon themselves completely to their pseudo-science. For far from its being any extraordinary abnormality, it is common to hundreds of thousands of men of all races and climates. Even a doctor whose clientele is limited has often come across it. But these two cases can, by their very nature, be exploited to good advantage for reasons of propaganda. Nazi propaganda never hesitates to clothe its monstrous lies in a scientific apparel. The method generally works, since those towards whom it is directed usually have no critical faculty and accept as true everything they hear.

The skeletons are wrapped in large sacks of strong paper, and sent on to Berlin marked: "Urgent: National Defense". I am relieved that they are out of my sight, for I spent many bitter hours because of them, both when they were alive and after their death.

On the eve of its collapse, the Third Reich ceases to worry any longer about world opinion, and rejects even the mask of its shady humanism. It begins to liquidate without delay the Jews still in their custody.

So it was that the turn of the model ghetto at Thereseinstadt arrived.

GOVERNMENTAL SS COMMITTEE OF THE REICH FOR THE RECRUITING AND EMPLOYMENT OF SLAVE LABORERS

Notice: The Jew X Y of the Reich protectorate is hereby advised that by order of the above-mentioned authority, he has been designated for the Service of Obligatory Labor. The draftee shall, before his departure, deposit his instruments, the tools necessary to the exercise of his profession, a supply of winter clothing, and food enough for a week, with the authority's representative. The date of departure will be annonced via public notice.

Thereseinstadt, the date...

Signature

As a result of these convocations, all the still healthy men of Thereseinstadt began arriving at Auschwitz. The whole story of obligatory labor was an infamous lie, merely a pretext to carry out the liquidation without interruption and to recuperate some sorely needed instruments, scarce tools and clothing needed by the German populace. Twenty thousand men fully capable of working and in the full flush of their youth, died in the gas chambers and were incinerated in the crematorium ovens. It took 48 hours to exterminate them all. For several days afterwards, silence reigned in the crematorium.

A fortnight after their liquidation deportee trains begin arriving one after the other at the Jewish ramp. Women and children scramble out of the box-cars. There is no selection. All are directed to the left.

On the floor of the undressing room are hundreds of tracts which read:

GOVERNMENTAL SS COMMITTEE OF THE REICH
FOR THE RECRUITING
AND EMPLOYMENT OF SLAVE LABORERS

Notice: The above mentioned authority hereby authorizes the wife and children of the Jew X Y of the Reich protectorate, called for obligatory work service, to join the above named Jew and to live together with him for the duration of his employment. Suitable lodgings are forseen.

Winter clothing, bedding, and provisions for a week shall be furnished by the voyagers.

Thereseinstadt, the date...

Signature

As a result of this diabolically conceived notice, twenty thousand women and children who wanted only to ease their husbands' lot, to join their fathers, followed them into the gas chambers and crematorium ovens.

Early in the morning of November 17th, 1944, an SS non commissioned officer comes into my room and informs me confidentially that, upon order of higher authority, it is henceforth forbidden to kill any more prisoners by any means whatsoever in the KZ. After having been witness to so many lies, I am unable to believe what he says, and express my doubts on the subject. But he reasserts forcefully that such are the instructions that have just been received by radio both at the crematoriums and at the SS political kommando. We shall soon see whether or not they are true. Personally, I fear it is only another trick.

Before the end of the morning, however, I have occasion to verify the truth of the SS's statement. A five box-car train, bearing 500 sick and weakened prisoners who think they are being sent to a rest camp, stops on the rails running between the first and second crematoriums. They are met by an SS political commission who converse with the commandant and the SS guards who accompanied the convoy. At last, before the gates of death, the five box-car train is turned round, and its occupants sent to the F camp hospital barracks. This is the first time during my stay in the crematorium that a convoy sent to Auschwitz's "Rest Camp" has not been liquidated either in the gas chamber or by the Ober's revolver within an hour after their arrival, but has, on the contrary, been given medical attention and allowed to rest in the beds of the camp's hospital barracks.

Scarcely an hour later, another train arrives, bearing 500 Slovakian Jews: old people, young children, men and women. They get out of the boxcars. I watch carefully for what is to follow. Line up and selection are the standard order of procedure on the Jewish ramp. But what I now witness is compeletely out of keeping with practice. The weary travellers take their heavy luggage with them when they get down, and without exception move off to the right in the direction of the KZ D camp. Mothers push baby carriages before them, and the young help the aged to walk. My immediate reaction is one of enthusiasm. There is no doubt about it: the crematorium gate has remained closed before the convoys sent to their death.

For the KZ prisoners the event is a good omen, giving birth to hope. For the Sonderkommando, on the contrary, the omen is bad, signifying that the end is near. I have no doubt about it, the liquidation will be carried out even before the end of the four month period. A new life begins in the KZ. There are no more violent deaths, but the bloody past must be hidden. The crematoriums are demolished, the pyre ditches are filled in, and any witness to or participant in the horror must disappear. Fully conscious of our approaching end, we greet the change with a mixture of joy and sad resignation.

Of the six million souls sent here from the four corners of Europe by command of the soft-brained chief, the pyromaniac of the Third Reich, to be assembled less than an hour before their death, on unloading lamps ominously lighted by the butchers of Maydanek, Treebilnka, Auschwitz, Birkenau, a few thousand will come out alive.

The heavy doors swing open. Oberschaarführer Steinberg enters the room, accompanied by two guards, machine guns in hand. "Aerzte heraus. All doctors outside!" he shouts impatiently. In company with my two colleagues and the laboratory assistant I leave the room. Steinberg and the two SS soldiers halt halfway between the two crematoriums. The Ober gives me a pile of number-filled papers which he has been holding in his hand, and tells me to find my number and strike it out. The papers are the Sonderkommando lists containing each man's tattoo number. I take out my pen and after hunting a while find my number and strike it out. He then tells me to do the same for my comrades. This done, he accompanies us to the Number 1 crematorium gate and tells us to return to our rooms, and not to leave them. We do as he orders.

The following morning a five truck convoy arrives in the crematorium courtyard and dumps out its cargo of bodies, those of the old Sonderkommando. A new group of thirty men carry them to the incineration room, where they are layed out in front of the ovens. Terrible burn scars cover their bodies. Their faces and clothing are so carbonized as to render them unrecognizable, the more so because in most cases even the tattoo number has disappeared.

After death by gas, on the pyre, by chloroform injections, by a bullet in the back of the neck, by phosphoric grenade, here is a sixth way of killing with which I was not till then acquainted.

During the night our poor comrades were taken into a nearby forest and killed by flame throwers.

That we four are still alive does not by any means signify that they want to spare us, but simply that we are indispensible to them. In allowing us to remain alive, Dr. Mengele has merely granted us a deferment. That is why the thought brings us neither comfort nor joy.

It is both an historic and happy moment when, the following morning, a kommando of prisoners arrives in the courtyard and, divided into two groups, begins the demolition of the building of so bloody a past. Seeing the red brick walls tumble one after the other, under the effects of the dynamite blasts, I have a presentiment of the III Reich's destruction. Jews built it. Jews are tearing it down. Never have any KZ prisoners worked with an intensity such as I read on the faces of these men, whose expressions reflect the hope of a better life to come.

In the dissecting room, everything moveable is packed. As for the dissecting table, only the marble plates are dismantled, and replaced by concrete supports. The moving is finished in a few hours and we spend the night in the Number 4 crematorium. We arrange the dissection table placing the pedestals and cups in position. After which the dissecting room is once again ready to function. For ten days nothing happens. Our indolent life continues ; we wander aimlessly about. More and more often our SS guards seek refuge in the narcotic state of drunkeness. It is rare if during the course of the day they have their wits about them for more than a few minutes.

One evening while we are having dinner, Obersturmführer Mussfeld enters unsteadily and, leaning on our table, says drunkenly, "Guten Abend, Jungs... Ihr werdet bald alle krepieren, naccher aber kommen wir." Good evening, children, soon you're going to die, but afterwards our turn will come. By these words spilled from the lips of a drunken man I so learned a truth I had already suspected. Our guards are going to disappear at the same time as we.

I offer a glass of tea with a shot of hot rum in it to the *Ober*, who empties the glasses one after the other with a great deal of satisfaction. He sits down at our table and, as though he wanted to fill the silence of the past, begins to talk. He tells how his wife was killed during an air raid, and that his son is on the Russian front.

It's all over, he says, the Russians are barely 40 kilometres from Auschwitz, and the whole of Germany is in exodus on the highways. Everybody is leaving the frontier areas to seek refuge in the West.

His words do our hearts good, and seeing the Obersturmführer's despair, a glimmer of hope begins to grow inside me. Perhaps we shall after all succeed in leaving here alive.

Our days have passed quietly, without interruption. It is said that Dr. Mengele has fled Auschwitz. The KZ has a new doctor, and what is more, beginning the first of the year, the area is no longer called KZ, but "Arbeitlager", that is, Work Camp. Everyting is breaking up and falling to pieces.

On the first of January a newspaper I happen to come across tells of the beginning of the Russian offensive. The noise of heavy artillery shakes my window panes. The line of fire grows daily closer. On January 17th I go to bed early, although I am not tired. I want to be alone with my thoughts. Lulled by the agreeable warmth of a coke stove, I soon drift off.

It must be about midnight. I am awakened by a series of powerful blasts, the crackling of machine gun fire, and dazzling flashes. I hear the sound of doors banging and footsteps running away. I jump out of bed. I want to know what's going on around me. I open the door and notice that the furnace room lights are on. The doors of the SS's rooms are wide open, witness to the speed of their departure.

The crematorium's heavy oaken gates are also open. Not a guard in sight. I glance quickly at the look out towers which surround us. For the first time in months I see that they are empty. I run back to wake up my companions. We dress in haste and get ready for the great journey. The SS have fled. We shall not stay a second longer in this place where for eight months Death has lain in wait to seize us every minute of every hour. We cannot wait for the Russians, since we risk to fall into the hands of the SS rear guard, who would not hesitate to execute us. Luckily we have excellent clothing, sweaters, overcoats, shoes, which means a great deal, since the temperature is at least 18 below. We each take a 2 pound can of food, and fill our pockets with medicines and cigarettes.

We leave, filled with the feverish sensation of liberation. Direction: the Birkenau KZ, two kilometres from the crematoriums. Immense flames glow along the horizon there. Probably it is the KZ burning.

dr. miklos nyiszli

(Translated from the French
of Tibère Kremer by R. S.)

book reviews

Lack of space has forced us to hold over all book reviews until the next issue. The following books were received :

A Mask for Janus, by W. S. Merwin, Yale University Press, $2.50
Geoffrey Cumberledge, 16/–

The Victorian Sage, by John Holloway, Macmillan, London, 18/–

The Collected Poems of Archibald Macleish, Houghton and Mifflin,
New York, $4.00

The Invisible Man, by Ralph Ellison, Gollancz, London, 15/–

13.771. — Arrault et Cie, Tours (France). — Printed in France. *Directeur :* Alice-Jane Lougee.
(Mars-Juin 1953). Premier et Deuxième trimestres.

1953

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To be published:

Hedyphagetica *(a novel)*
by Austryn Wainhouse
Molloy *(a novel)* by Samuel Beckett

13, rue Jacob, Paris 6.°

La collection

Roman

Cette collection, consacrée au roman et à l'art romanesque, ne comporte que des œuvres d'auteurs français et étrangers encore inconnus chez nous, la plupart, œuvres de jeunes écrivains Elle paraît sous la direction de la revue *Roman*, et sa couverture, comme celle de la revue, est composée par Henri Matisse.

Collection de romans, préoccupée de recherches et d'exigences techniques, qui ne considérera pas une technique comme une recette, et elle entend que le romancier soit « engagé » tout entier dans son œuvre, non par les jeux de l'esprit, mais à cause de ce qu'il aime et de ce qu'il veut. Les ouvrages publiés ici exprimeront les « métiers » le plus divers et les visions le plus différentes, tous liés à la présence humaine. On voudrait tenter de rendre au mot roman, si souvent galvaudé, la réalité vivante qu'il doit avoir.

UN TEMPS POUR RIEN par Jacques HOWLETT

L'AMOUR DIFFICILE par Jean-Pierre MONNIER

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AUTUMN 1953

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2

editorial

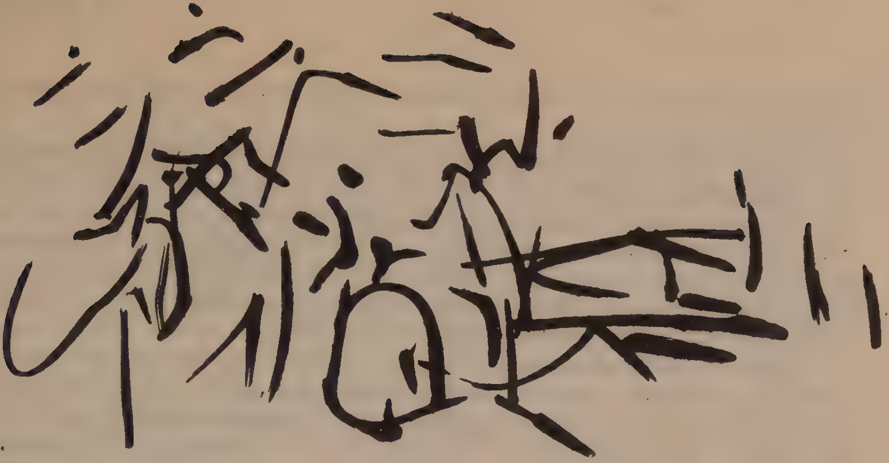
It is seldom useful to distinguish between *what* is said and *how* it is said, for the expressive element in language is part of the content. If there is something vitally new to be communicated, the texture of the language through which it comes into being will reflect on the objective level the originality of the subjective attitude. Words, combinations of them, will be used in a new way. Stock phrases, imprecise as they are, will be used only for specific technical (e g. satirical) reasons. Otherwise, not at all.

Thus, our first glance at any piece of writing will be at its texture, at the vitality and above all at the precision of the language, especially where the syntax is most unconventional. Only after having satisfied ourselves that it is texturally of interest, will we deem it worthwhile to consider plot, structure, form, what you will. That, basically, is the distinction between serious and popular writing. Both may have plot, structure, or form; the latter is devoid of interest from the point of view of texture.

If the expressive element in language is indeed part of the content, then there is no "new way of saying old things". The so-called "old things" are impregnated even in conception by the individual quality of the mind; they are transformed in the process of original expression. The serious writer has always been concerned primarily with texture, with the manipulation of language itself, and his aim has always been *to say new things.*

A recent English critic writing on "the novel" was forced by the stricture of his definitions to the conclusion that Joyce, Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf amongst others, were inferior novelists. He admitted (of the latter two) that they were nevertheless, "great artists". If that is so, his peculiar subject, "the novel", is of little interest, and he would be well-advised to leave "the novel" alone and to concern himself with "the writings" of significant writers.

In twentieth century prose, the two pioneers of "charging language with meaning" were James Joyce and Gertrude Stein. We would do well to consider them. In a literary climate in which we are exhorted to remember that "novelists ought to write novels" – where accent, that is, is laid upon plot – we might point out that the imperative is redundant, that novelists, we suppose, and by definition, do, although serious writers, we feel, may not.



a journal

1. men that glance back

The town was Segantini's birthplace and remains, to this day, a health retreat. There, died a painter who enjoys a warmer place in my heart: Scipione; and the woman of whom I shall tell—Scipione must have seen her from his sickroom window. His *Men that Glance Back* must have seen her too, and it is this that may account for their haunted look: their faces of sinners, of headsmen. The sanatorium where we lived was fifty meters from the one where Scipione died Both buildings stood in isolation on an avenue beyond the edge of the town, bounded half by a railing and half by a wire-mesh fence. Between the avenue and the town were fields and the railway tracks: in back, a steep rise with a pathway that led to the summit of the mountain, to a crumbling ancient castle. But Scipione, as he lay dying, did not see the mountain; his last view of nature was of the fields, the plane trees that lined the avenue, the sky hanging low over the horizon, ever threatening, sullen sometimes and ocean-blue and black; and, in this light, the tangible presence of the lake—Garda—out across the fields, beyond the town, far in the distance where the train whistle scattered astray.

I should not have thought of Scipione were it not for that light during the winter that followed his death, so inexpressible and yet so much his own, which he did not have time to paint; were it not for those *Men that Glance Back,* kept in his sickroom, which have always, for years, from when I first discovered them for myself, been associated with that woman. For they glance back at me and my four companions.

Of them, two are still alive; so much as to have had since then time to fight in wars, to marry, to have children, and luck besides. It is in my own and in their names that I report: mine, Molfetta's, and the Perugian's. The Barese and the Fiumean have since rendered themselves up to God, in Whom they believed, confessing before they died: for them, perhaps, Scipione's men have faced forward.

We were only twenty, this is all the Fiumean and the Barese may have said; all that I myself may say. But is this any excuse?

Twenty, ridden with disease, and feeling ourselves to be shut away in a prison. And she... She was a girl whom everyone knew. For years a man had only to beckon—a villager or patient, no matter—for her to lie with him among the castle ruins, or down on the banks of the Sarca, or under the viaduct.

They would give her a few lire or, as she preferred, a "present", a bunch of grapes, and I remember a sponge, and once a barrette. One evening when we had as usual succeeded in slipping past the duty-nurse, meeting the girl half-way up the footpath, the Barese took with him a deck of playing cards, so worn-out as no longer to be usable.

"You can resell them," he told her.

"Yes, I can," she answered. "This is a wonderful present."

We were poor... and she?...

Some evenings she had nothing.

"But what does it matter?" she would say. "Are you happy?... Where are you from?. . Does your town have a river?... Or a mountain?... A lake?...

We would reply: Yes, no... We never gave her our real names when she asked. And we would draw cards to see who was to have her first.

"You... I'm next... he follows me. ."

"Molfetta... the Barese... the Perugian .."

And she never talked about herself, except once when Molfetta asked: "Do you do any sort of work" and she laughed and said: "Oh, I used to wash clothes, but then the women didn't want me any more. None of them. Not even at the lake. And at Riva and Malcesine and Torbole it was all the same."

"But why not?"

"They were jealous", she said.

The nurse and the bartender had a half-day off once each week, and the bicycle hirer and the girls who invited us into their homes all told us:

"She arrived here as a child with the refugees, back in '15 or '16, a waif. No one claimed her and she's managed to get along ever since."

"How?"

"*Some*how. She's been a regular little devil—there's no getting around it—always, even as a child."

She was a tender creature, docile, harried, but never discouraged, never offended.

"Your name's Mario—do you see, I remember? What is your favorite color? Mine's yellow."

"She's a savage! Look how she lives, look *where* she lives! And they don't arrest her, they don't put her in a home!" Half-way up the mountainside she had built herself a hutch of bushes and scrub wood, and there she lived now that everybody shrank away from her, having learned that she was infected not only with our disease, but with another which someone, some one of many men, had given her. She had gone one day to the in-patient department, and it was as if they had hung a leper's bell round her neck; for at once, through the village and from one sanatorium to the next, the word went out, and she confirmed it:

"If you're not afraid—That's what they told me... No, no, because if it's true—"

One morning we saw her outside the gate, leaning with her back against a plane tree looking up at our windows. (We hated her ourselves now, for having confessed to the doctors that we had lain with her, we had been punished and had to submit to a blood test. We loathed her, because we could not have her again.) We signalled to her to come around to the place by the fence where we could meet unseen, all five of us on our side, in the corner of the garden where there was a cedar tree and a fishpond.

Not once did she meet our eye; she said only:

"They're hunting for me. And I'm hungry".

"Wait a moment," one of us told her. And he went inside, returning with part of a loaf of bread from our table.

We stood lined along the inside of the fence; she on the other, with her head lowered, with one hand clasped in the other near her waist.

"Here," the one who had got the bread said. "Take it, you—" And he insulted her. He pushed the bread into the wire-mesh. "I've got an apple too, if you want it."

"Oh, good," she replied, "that's a wonderful present."

"It's a pity, though," he said. "It's a pity it won't go through the fence. Here, you try," he said to the one standing beside him, handing him the bread and the apple.

The second man tried to force them through: "No, it's quite impossible," he declared.

She had stepped toward the second man with the bread and apple.

"You'd really like it, wouldn't you, you—?" And he insulted her too. "You try," he said to the next man.

She moved again.

It had become a game, certainly not premeditated, but a game none the less, in which we were all five of us in tacit agreement as to the opening, how it was to proceed, and especially as to its outcome.

The fourth man performed his part. She moved again as the new man tried to push the bread and the apple through the fence, although the mesh was so close as not even to permit the apple to pass. She must have thought that the game was about to end, that whoever was last would throw the bread over the top. It seemed to us that she smiled, amused by the game, as if she did not hear the insults that were a part of it, as if we were seeking to disguise our charity, betokened by a piece of bread and an apple, in play.

"Is a little bread and an apple enough?"

She answered: "Oh, yes, plenty, thank you. It's a wonderful present. Throw it to me over the fence."

"Over the fence?" he said. "Like this?" And with all his might, first he threw the apple, then the bread, over the fence into the fishpond, where they fell both with a splash.

We laughed shamelessly, the five of us, as we watched her go scrambling hand over hand up the mountainside. She disappeared where the trail began—and for ever, from us and from the village.

And whenever we asked after her: Who knows?" they would say. "Maybe she's pitched camp in Torbole."

"Maybe in Malcesine."

"Riva possibly."

"No; better, let's hope she's thrown herself into the lake."

Scipione's men, then, who knew her, are glancing back at us—now I know. I know, and Molfetta knows, and the Perugian. Only for the Fiumean and the Barese have they faced forward again.

2. diary of villa rosa

A long siege of reading with too little to eat, that alone, eventually got the best of me and I was obliged to spend two years at Villa Rosa. Two years which were, in every sense, a time of decision. I entered hot-tempered and left remissive; I learned to fear death, to respect life; above all, the life of others, and for the very reason that I learned regard for my own. It is the one and only novel I desire to write, yet there is little likelihood that I shall ever undertake it. It will remain what it is, simply the diary I kept: returned from hell, it would require genius to present it properly.

25 March 1935 = I am twenty-one, and now, within these walls—it is a charming little villa, painted rose, with a garden, a pond, a large cedar tree, verandah, balconies, a small tower serving as solarium, rung by mountains; and there's a lake near by—now we shall see. Who is right, the doctors or I? I, of course.

I have brought with me all I own: a suit, one pair of pajamas, a little linen, thirty-seven lire, and three books—Leopardi, Ungaretti, and Bilenchi's *Capofabbrica*. I bid you all good-by, girls, my friends, and war if it come... Ungaretti. God, it is not yet "my turn to die."

May = C. is Perugian. Thirty-seven, I think; back in Perugia he was an ice cream vendor. The Syndicate pays for him, as it does for me, Cel., Br., and the rest of us. He's an intelligent, retiring man; whenever he speaks there is nothing that does not seem the result of thought, a limpid concentrate of meaning, which, upon reconsideration, however, strikes one as obscure, only maxims. Expounding his views on the war that is brewing in Africa, he says: "The decline of Rome began when it became an empire. What's more, Napoleon screwed up the French Revolution by becoming Consul and Emperor. But then, can there be empire without there first having been revolution?"

He has a rotten stomach, he's thin as a lath, his head nothing but skin; but his eyes are as clear as the dawn up here, very tender, the eyes of a girl... He rises from table with determination enough, morning and evening, to walk round the garden a hundred times—for his digestion (the stomach for us is everything). Then he lounges back in the deck chair and curses and asks me to read him Leopardi.

The villagers here are so hungry that they form queues outside for *our* left-overs. There are not only old men and tramps, but mostly young boys and women with children at their breasts and skirts. They queue up at the service entrance as if before friars ladling out soup. At times it is the doctor himself who decides upon their helpings. We stuff our pockets with rolls to slip to them through the fence. Each has his own customers. I've passed over an old man to give food to a little girl. She is ten or so, and I don't even know her name. She is stunted and has yellow hair, and she says to me: "T'ank you." And I say to her: "You don't have to t'ank me." And so it goes, each morning. Because it is only then, at breakfast-time, that we are able to steal rolls from the baskets, directly they arrive warm and fresh from the bakery.

4 October 1935 = Italy yesterday declared war on Ethiopia. It was a damp day, the mountains lost in the mists. Our own radio was out of order, so they had us listen to Mussolini's speech in the sanatorium next door. Everyone who was not bed-ridden went over. I was about to go myself, but *she*, standing outside the gate, winked at me to remain... She followed me into her tiny room, under the dormer... We lay together there in the vast silence; in the distance the whistle of the narrow-gauge train drifted down from the tracks out across the lake, and, muffled by the fog and the closed window, we could also hear the radio... I thought of city squares that must have been crowded with people. I no longer have the enthusiasms of once. Still, I was in a fretful mood: it was bitterness perhaps, humiliation, envy—I don't know. But afterwards, more love-making: her caresses, her voice; she is good, and she is sweet, but she is not comfort enough.

November = Thomas Mann is indeed a great writer; but what an amateur consumptive his Castorp is! For that matter, *all* the patients in the *Mountain* are somehow stylized—mere textbook consumptives. They are no more real in respect to their disease, and their reactions, impulses and emotions deriving from it, than the consumption of *la dame aux camélias* and that of Mimí in *Bohème* are real. *The Magic Mountain* is a reflection of the intellectualized concept. There is this difference, however, that in Verdi there's music: music straight from the heart, radiant with health; in Mann there is only philosophy. This may be why I like *Buddenbrooks* more.

Paris has died. An angel, he was only thirteen. With pastel crayons he used to draw houses and towers that rose from cloud-tops, and beneath, fields of browsing sheep; he would say that that was heaven. And he would draw the Lord with tunic and white beard and the staff of St. Joseph, since "God and St. Joseph are the same person," he would say: "the father of Jesus." He died in my arms, and he said to me: "Do not be afraid."

I must not forget that I wept.

There's a petition to the Duce which has to be signed, circulating through the various sanatoria. Since we are not able to bear arms, we wish, it claims, to contribute to the so-called counter-sanctions by going without meat twice a week. F and I refused: we were the only ones, and they threatened to expel us. We found the whole affair both ridiculous and shameful. And when they branded us "anti-Fascists," we answered that we would sign a declaration to the effect that we wanted a double ration of meat to hasten our recovery, and as soon as released (and we asked to be no more than "clinically well)", we would take it upon ourselves to enlist as "Death Volunteers." C., who signed without undue fuss, made no secret of his contempt for our attitude. "As if our ration had not already been cut in half!" he said. An argument ensued, but finally we made peace.

We have a new arrival. An eighteen-year-old *liceo* student from Reggio Emilia, with red hair and a little birthmark on his neck. We gave him our customary welcome. Just as they reach the gate, F. and I launch into the *Navy March* and carry the record player out onto the balcony; and the others—Br., Cel., All., the carabiniere, etc.—all go to their windows and begin a loud dirge:

Your fate is determined, you'll soon perceive:
Once you have entered, you never will leave!

and then:

THROUGH ME IS THE WAY TO THE CITY OF WOE...

The recruit, instinctively glancing toward the building from which the music is coming, sees ghostly figures draped in sheets peering over the windowsills, and hears voices warning him away. But this isn't the half of it. For a new resident, whatever his physical condition, never knows the truth. He is convinced that there is little or nothing the matter with him. "In two or three months..." they have told him. "All you need is a change of climate." And the Reggian really believed that he was going on vacation to convalesce from the after-effects of pleurisy. That evening, however, Br. and All. continued where they had left off, painting for him, in bolder and blacker colors than it could conceivably have been, "the truth." They informed him that leprosy, if compared with *his* malady, was a mere heat rash, and that they themselves had been at Villa Rosa for three, five, even seven years, some of them. This so frightened the Reggian that his temperature shot up, and this morning he took a turn for the worse. We had been a little belated in telling him that it was only a joke.

December = We all—all of us—have a screw loose somewhere. There's M., for instance, convinced that syphilis combats T. B., and happy as a lark at the results of his Wassermann. And B., with the slight after-effects of pleurisy (in his case it is really true) knowing that he took refuge here for the sole purpose of avoiding the draft—and he successfully avoided it—, beside himself to find that he has lost 150 grams in the past month. He lay sobbing flat on his face in bed, refusing to believe that although today he was weighed in slippers, last month he was wearing ski boots. There's Fiordelmondo, whom I cannot for the life of me imagine buttoned up in the uniform of a carabiniere, and with such a name! and that look of his, of a young tough. He stares at his blood-streaked sputum, and each time it comes up, loudly proclaims: "For the King!" But it is naively, almost with pride, that he says it; not at all in anger, rather as if examining the scar of a wound received in action. (He's really got it too—the result of a routine *corvée* in a country outpost.) And he's not crazy: his is the guileless soul of a carabiniere. So it is with each of us, myself included—me certain that there was a mix-up in the X-ray plates when the diagnosis of my case was first made. Anyway, it's true—and *she*, would she give herself to me if she didn't know me as I am?

I have torn up all the sheets which treated questions pertaining to this disease, as seen both from my own and the viewpoint of others. We do quite enough talking about it as it is, all of us to some extent, day and night; but what exactly is the point of it? I took my big chance when I was a youngster, once when I fell over backwards and struck my head in the dirt and then delayed before taking anti-tetanus shots—the risk is not now. This is a diary in which I must record my own and the significant doings of my companions for the day that I am well and can shake the hand of whoever remain. The important thing is to know that there is nothing so very awful about all this, neither hereditary nor incurable, however much ignorance, which is everywhere to be found, would have it believed otherwise. Mast. is a case in point: now that he has left, I need not hold so strictly to my promise never to mention his confidences.

Mast. is a man of thirty, orphaned in infancy, wealthy, a member of the Neapolitan bourgeoisie. Until attaining his majority he was the ward of one of his father's brothers. At the age of twenty-three, while diligently studying to complete work on his doctorate, he was stricken with haemoptysis; he thought at once that his fate was sealed: a maternal uncle of his had also died of the *mal subtil*. (That Mast. is Neapolitan is irrelevant, for he might just as well have been Piedmontese, Venetian or Tuscan; he was simply one of those that thinks: "It's leprosy, and you die!") He confided in no one, not even his family doctor; for the diagnosis, he consulted a specialist who said, without expressing alarm, that at that moment he did not even require pneumothorax: simply rest, special nutrition, and injections. But he, Mast., knew that "you die." "And if I don't follow your prescription," he asked the specialist, "that is, if I decide instead to enjoy life, how long would you give me?" And the doctor, assuming the question to have been in jest, replied: "Even a year." Whereupon Mast. went directly to his fiancée's father, a magistrate, and secured his promise not to breathe a word of what he was about to tell him, and only him, by way of explaining like a gentleman his reason for breaking off the engagement. And assembling all the cash he had on hand, Mast. then announced to friends and relations that he was embarking on a trip in connection with his studies... That was back in '28 or '29. He toured Europe, spending a year in dissipation and revelry; and slowly, as the symptoms of his disease grew more and more pronounced, his determination to treat himself to pleasure found new impetus... A year later he was in a sanatorium at Davos-Platz, and there he began to see reality as it was: it had been only during his year of carousal that he had gambled with his life, certainly not before, not in the beginning; for then, a year before, he now realized, a special diet, a long period of rest, and intravenous injections would have been sufficient... And now he knows, he really knows that his days are numbered; and now that he does know, he is filled with the wildest of hopes as he wanders from one sanatorium to another in search of a tuberculotherapist "that really knows his job." Strength born of desperation and his desire to live are all that keep him going... His friends and relatives in Naples, who still don't know, write to him in Lausanne, and the good judge continues to keep that secret entrusted to his word of honor, thereby safeguarding the name of a family.

I think of events which Mast. recounted from his year of pleasure: succinctly, the pleasures of pornography: Bal Bullier, the Pam-Pam; of the way his eyes would light up between hacking coughs, and his genuine and intense despair at feeling his life slip away.

And he had no respect for Gozzano, and when I recited lines to him from Corazzini, whose work he scarcely knew, he found the verse so silly that I was able to cheer him some. He was a cultivated man: his poet Carducci, his philosopher Croce, and his ideal, naturally, liberalism and democracy. Yet with all these "lights," he was still in darkness.

This morning the vulture that lives among the ruins of the castle circled high above Villa Rosa. Then it perched on the crown of the cedar, contemplating us. Bart. made the Sign of the Cross.

Yesterday, when we had our free afternoon, we went to the lake. F., Br., All., and I. The beer is good, even in this season, and the lake was placid and beautiful, the surface faintly ruffled by a breeze, and the sun directly above Mount Ponale: which is how Catullus must have seen it from his promontory, and Goethe, the few hours he spent at an inn in Torbole or Malcesine; it may be that D'Annunzio too, so very old and so great, immured like his battleship, sees it like this through his tawdry monocle à la Ojetti .. Emerging from a house in Riva, we were much more the "Vergini delle Rocce" than "Alcyone."... We hired a boat and commenced to oar, proceeding to the mouth of the Sarca, where we ventured out with the view of going to Limone, though already breathless and slick with sweat. Suddenly Br. threw down his oar and stood up: "We must be crazy!" he shouted. "This exercise will only tear open pits in our lungs!" It was then as if each of us withdrew into his skeleton, we had forgotten that we weren't well. I could feel a cascade of stones and needles inside my chest. The rowing ceased, though F. guided the tiller and kept us from drifting with breeze. "They'll just have to come and pick us up," we said. It was nightfall before we were finally taken in tow by an outboard motorboat. *(January, '36)*.

Here ends the selection of excerpts on which I am now decided, comprising less than a tenth of the entire diary. It has been a wholly subjective selection, and it may be that the most interesting passages, in consideration of the reader's curiosity, have been rejected. But one does not return to the flames with impunity, though there is now a feeling that I would; and this indeed is a better reason not to return. Anyway, the face of the countryside has changed. After twelve years' absence, I stopped there with the caravan accompanying cyclists in the Giro d'Italia, and under my dust-stained, sweat-stained coveralls my heart skipped a beat. I took off my "Willier" cap, presented to me by Cottur, and scaled it up onto a verandah of Villa Rosa thronged with patients. And as their faces were unknown to me, so I could not recognize the countryside, either. New buildings, creeping up the slopes of the mountain, overflowing into the fields that extend to the lakeshore, had altered the landscape. The narrow gauge railroad and the little pioneering train are gone; a wing of the old castle up on the mountain has collapsed; and the vulture that lived there once has died or flown away perhaps. The embankment now is a tree-shaded avenue that *swerves away and rises gently toward the park, cutting off the town proper from the cluster of sanatoria. A garden has been laid out in the center of the town square and they have put up a bus station. It is these things that make the place so different to those who come for the first time, filled with bacilli and hope.*

Boys of Villa Rosa:
Remember that cap tossed to you by a man in blue coveralls and dark glasses. It was not just the easy gift of a sportsman, a salute, a toast to your health. It was a testimonial.

translated from the italian by
ben johnson

vasco pratolini

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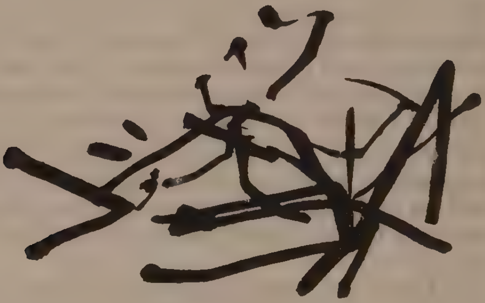
air



Cairn and gallows
are the fellows
of this heath.

Hanged and magpie
are the wardens
of this feast.

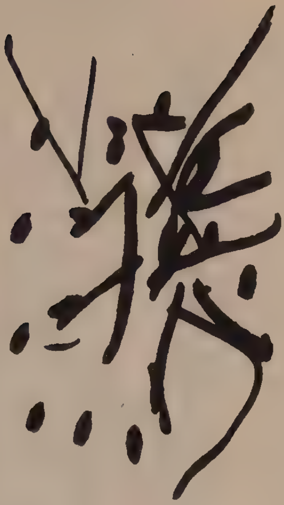
Moon and mandrake
are the lovers
of this night.

Owl and craken
are the choir
of its dark.

And bandmaster
Madman fills
The bagpipes
With cracked breath
And drones it
All to death.

christopher logue

postoperativeshock



When Senator Clump
  of Mississippi,
Came out of the ether
  the South's pride,
To see the negro
  neurosurgeon,
He said,
'Take off your cap, son.'
And died.

jerome salzmann

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hunting the cockatrice

With mirrors sewn about his vest
he goes to brave the basilisk,
deep, in the cave which adders shun.
Staggering back, mirrors cracked and blinded,
his smoking eyes two red stars winking.

And do not ask what he has seen
in case the telling kills your sight.
Pull the shrivelled body from the cave
and burn it on your highest pyre.

The man?
Give him a dog and a thick white stick.

charles fox

extract from

MOLLOY

I am in my mother's room. It's I who live there now. I don't know how I got there. Perhaps in an ambulance, certainly a vehicle of some kind. I was helped. I'd never have got there alone. There's this man who comes every week. Perhaps I got here thanks to him. He says not. He gives me money and takes away the pages. So many pages, so much money. Yes, I work now, a little like I used to, except that I don't know how to work any more. That doesn't matter, apparently. What I'd like now is to speak of the things that are left, say my good-byes, finish dying. They don't want that. Yes, they're more than one, apparently. But it's always the same one that comes. You'll do that later, he says. Good. The truth is I haven't much will left. When he comes for the fresh pages he brings back the previous week's. They are marked with signs I don't understand. Anyway I don't read them. When I've done nothing he gives me nothing, he scolds me. Yet I don't work for money. For what then? I don't know. The truth is I don't know much. For example my mother's death. Was she already dead when I came? Or did she only die later? I mean enough to bury. I don't know. Perhaps they haven't buried her yet. In any case I have her room. I sleep in her bed. I piss and shit in her pot. I have taken her place. I must resemble her more and more. All I need now is a son. Perhaps I have one somewhere. But I think not. He would be old now, nearly as old as me. It was a little chambermaid. It wasn't real love. The real love was in another. We'll come to that. Her name? I've forgotten it again It seems to me sometimes that I even knew my son, that I helped him. Then I tell myself it is impossible. It is impossible I could ever have helped anyone. I've forgotten how to spell too, and half the words. That doesn't matter apparently. Good. He's a queer card who comes to see me. He comes every Sunday apparently. The other days he isn't free. He's always thirsty. It was he told me I'd begun all wrong, that I should have begun differently. He must be right. I began at the beginning, like an old fool, can you imagine that. Here's my beginning. Because they're keeping it apparently. I took a lot of trouble with it. Here it is. It gave me a lot of trouble. It was the beginning, you see. Whereas now it's nearly the end. Is what I do now any better? I don't know. That's beside the point. Here's my beginning. It must mean something, since they're keeping it. Here it is.

This time, then once more I think, then perhaps a last time, then I think it'll be over, with that world too. Premonition of the last but one but one. All grows dim. A little more, and you'll go blind. It's in the head. It doesn't work any more, it says, I don't work any more. You go dumb as well and sounds fade. The threshold scarcely crossed that's how it is. It's the head. It must have had enough. So that you say, I'll manage this time, then perhaps once more, then perhaps a last time, then nothing more. You are hard set to formulate this thought, for it is one, in a sense. Then you try to pay attention, to consider with attention all those dim things, saying to yourself, laboriously, It's my fault. Fault? That was the word. But what fault? It's not goodbye, and what magic in those dim things to which it will be time enough, when next they pass, to say goodbye. For you must say goodbye, it would be folly not to say goodbye, when the time comes. If you think of the forms and light of other days it is without regret. But you seldom think of them, with what would you think of them? I don't know. People pass too, hard to distinguish from yourself. That is discouraging. That's how I saw A and C going slowly towards each other, unconscious of what they were doing. It was on a road remarkably bare, I mean without hedges or ditches or any kind of border, in the country, for cows were chewing in enormous fields, lying and standing, in the evening silence. Perhaps I'm inventing a little, perhaps embellishing, but on the whole that's how it was. They chew, swallow, then after a short pause effortlessly bring up the next mouthful. A neck muscle stirs and the jaws begin to grind again. But perhaps I'm remembering things. The road, hard and white, seared the tender pastures, rose and fell at the whim of hills and hollows. The town wasn't far. It was two men, unmistakably, one short and one tall. They had left the town, first one, then the other, and the first, weary or remembering a duty, had retraced his steps. The air was sharp, for they wore greatcoats. They looked alike, but no more than others do. At first a wide space lay between them. They couldn't have seen each other, even had they raised their heads and looked about, because of this wide space, and then because of the undulating land, which caused the road to be in waves, not deep, but deep enough, deep enough. But the moment came when together they went down into the same trough and in this trough finally met. To say they were acquainted, no, nothing warrants it. But perhaps at the sound of their steps, or warned by some obscure instinct, they raised their heads and observed each other, for a good fifteen paces, before they stopped, breast to breast. Yes, they did not pass each other by, but halted, face to face, as in the country, of an evening, on a deserted road, two wayfaring strangers often do, without there being anything extraordinary about it. But they knew each other perhaps. Now in any case they do, now I think they will know each other, greet each other, even in the depths of the town. They turned towards the sea which, far in the east, beyond the fields, climbed high in the waning sky, and exchanged a few words. Then each went on his way. Each went on his way, A towards the town, C by ways he seemed hardly to know, or not at all, for he went with uncertain steps and often stopped to look about him, like someone trying to fix landmarks in his mind, for one day, perhaps, he may have to retrace his steps, you never know. The treacherous hills where fearfully he ventured were no doubt only known to him from afar, seen perhaps from his bedroom window or, one black day, from the summit of a monument which, having nothing in particular to do and turning to height for solace he had paid his few coppers to climb, up the winding stones. From there he must have seen it all, the plain, the sea, and then these very hills that some call mountains, indigo in places in the evening light, their serried ranges crowding to the sky-line, cloven with hidden valleys that the eye divines from sudden shifts of colour and then from other signs for which there are no words, nor even thoughts. But all are not divined, even from that height, and often where only one escarpment is supposed, and one crest, in reality there are two, two escarpments, two crests, riven by a valley. But now he knows these hills, that is he knows them better, and if ever again he sees them from afar it will be I think with other eyes, and not only that but the within, all that inner space one never sees, the brain and heart and other caverns where thought and feeling hold their sabbath, all that too quite differently disposed. He looks old and it is a sorry sight to see him solitary after so many years, so many days and nights unthinkingly given to that rumour rising at birth and even earlier, *What shall I do? What shall I do?* now low, a murmur, now precise as the headwaiter's *And to follow?* and often rising to a scream. And in the end, or almost, to be abroad alone, by unknown ways, in the gathering night, with a stick. It was a stout stick, he used it to thrust himself onward, or as a defence, when the time came, against dogs and marauders. Yes, night was gathering, but the man was innocent, greatly innocent, he had nothing to fear, though he went in fear, he had nothing to fear, there was nothing they could do to him, or very little. But he can't have known it. I wouldn't know it myself, if I thought about it. Yes, he saw himself threatened, his body threatened, his reason threatened, and perhaps he was, perhaps they were, in spite of his innocence. What business has innocence here? What relation to the innumerable spirits of darkness? It's not clear. It seemed to me he wore a cocked hat. I remember being struck by it, as I wouldn't have been for example by a cap or by a bowler. I watched him recede, overtaken by his anxiety, at least by an anxiety which was not necessarily his, but of which as it were he partook. Who knows if it wasn't my own anxiety overtaking him. He hadn't seen me. I was perched higher than the road's highest point and flattened what is more against a rock the same colour as myself, that is grey. The rock he probably saw. He gazed around as if to engrave the landmarks on his memory, and must have seen the rock in the shadow of which I crouched like Belacqua, or Sordello, I forget. But a man, a fortiori myself, isn't exactly a landmark, because. I mean if by some strange chance he were to pass that way again, after a long lapse of time, vanquished; or to look for some forgotten thing, or to destroy something, his eyes would search out the rock, not the haphazard in its shadow of that unstable fugitive thing, still living flesh. No, he certainly didn't see me, for the reasons I've given and then because he was in no humour for that, that evening, no humour for the living, but rather for what doesn't stir, or stirs so slowly that a child would scorn it, let alone an old man. However that may be, I mean whether he saw me or whether he didn't, I repeat I watched him recede, at grips (myself) with the temptation to get up and follow him, perhaps even to catch up on him one day, so as to know him better, be myself less lonely. But in spite of my soul's leap out to him, at the end of its elastic, I saw him only darkly, because of the dark and then because of the terrain, in the folds of which he disappeared from time to time, to re-emerge farther on, but most of all I think because of other things calling me and towards which too one after the other my soul was straining, unmethodical, distracted. I mean of course the fields, whitening under the dew, and the animals, ceasing from wandering and settling for the night, and the sea, of which nothing, and the sharpening line of crests, and the sky where without seeing them I felt the first stars tremble, and my hand on my knee and above all the other wayfarer, A or C, I don't remember, going resignedly home. Yes, towards my hand also, which my knee felt tremble and of which my eyes saw the wrist only, the heavily veined back, the pallid rows of knuckles. But that is not, I mean my hand, what I wish to speak of now, everything in due course, but A or C returning to the town he had just left. But after all what was there particularly urban in his aspect? He was bare-headed, wore sand-shoes, smoked a cigar. He moved with a kind of loitering indolence which rightly or wrongly seemed to me expressive. But all that proved nothing, refuted nothing. Perhaps he had come from afar, from the other end of the island even, and was approaching the town for the first time or returning to it after a long absence. A little dog followed him, a pomeranian I think, but I don't think so. I wasn't sure at the time and I'm still not sure, though I've hardly thought about it. The little dog followed wretchedly, after the fashion of pomeranians, stopping, describing long girations, giving up and then, a little farther on, beginning all over again. Constipation is a sign of good health in pomeranians. At a given moment, pre-established if you like, I don't mind, the gentleman turned back, took the little creature in his arms, drew the cigar from his lips and buried his face in the orange fleece, for it was a gentleman, that was obvious. Yes, it was an orange pomeranian, the less I think of it the more certain I am. And yet. But would he have come from afar, bare-headed, in sand-shoes, smoking a cigar, followed by a pomeranian? Did he not seem rather to have issued from the ramparts, after a good dinner, to take his dog and himself for a walk, like so many citizens, dreaming and farting, when the weather is fine? But was not perhaps in reality the cigar a cutty, and were not the sand-shoes boots, hobnailed, dust-whitened, and what prevented the dog from being one of those stray dogs that you pick up and take in your arms, from compassion or because you have long been straying with no other company than the endless roads, sands, shingle, bogs and heather, than this nature answerable to another court, than at long intervals the fellow convict you long to stop, embrace, suck, suckle and whom you pass by, with hostile eyes, for fear of his familiarities. Until the day when, your endurance gone, in this world for you without arms, you catch up in yours the first mangy cur you meet, carry it the time needed for it to love you and you it, then throw it away. Perhaps he had come to that, in spite of appearances. He disappeared, his head on his chest, the smoking object in his hand. Let me try and explain. From things about to disappear I turn away in time. To watch them out of sight, no, I can't do it. It was in this sense he disappeared. Looking away I thought of him, saying, He dwindles, dwindles. I knew what I meant. I knew I could catch him, lame as I was. I had only to want to. And yet no, for I did want to. To get up, to get to the road, to set hobbling off in pursuit of him, to hail him, what could be easier. He hears my cries, turns, waits for me. I am up against him, up against the dog, gasping, between my crutches. He is a little frightened of me, a little sorry for me, I disgust him not a little. I am not a pretty sight, I don't smell good. What is it I want? Ah that tone I know, compounded of pity, of fear, of disgust. I want to see the dog, see the man, at close quarters, know what smokes, inspect the shoes, find out other things. He is kind, tells me of this and of that and of other things, whence he comes, whither he goes. I believe him, I know it's my only chance to—my only chance, I believe all I'm told, I've disbelieved only too much in my long life, now I swallow everything, avidly. What I need now is stories, it took me a long time to know that, and I'm not sure of it. There I am then, informed as to certain things, knowing certain things about him, things I didn't know, things that troubled me, even things that never troubled me. What language. I am even capable of having learnt what his profession is, I who am so interested in professions. And to think I try my best not to talk about myself. In a moment I shall talk about the cows, about the sky, if I can. There I am then, he leaves me, he's in a hurry. He didn't seem to be in a hurry, he was loitering, I've already said so, but after three minutes talking with me he is in a hurry, he has to hurry. I believe him. And once again I am I will not say alone, no, that's not like me, but, how shall I say, I don't know, restored to myself, no, I never left myself, free, yes, I don't know what that means but it's the word I intend to use, free to do what, to do nothing, to know, but what, the laws of the mind perhaps, of my mind, that for example water rises in proportion as it drowns you and that you would do better, at least no worse, to obliterate texts than to blacken margins, to fill in the holes of words till all is blank and flat and the whole ghastly business looks like what it is, senseless, speechless, issueless misery. So I doubtless did better, at least no worse, not to disturb myself from my observation post. But instead of observing I had the weakness to return in spirit to the other, the man with the stick. Then the murmurs began again. To restore silence is the role of objects. I said, Who knows if he hasn't simply come out to take the air, relax, stretch his legs, disinflame his brain by stamping the blood down to his feet, so as to ensure himself a good night, a joyous awakening, an enchanted morrow. Was he carrying as much as a scrip? But this gait, the anxious looks, the club, could these be reconciled with one's conception of what is called a little turn. But the hat, a town hat, an old-fashioned town hat, which the least wind would carry far away. Unless it was attached under the chin, by means of a string or an elastic. I took off my hat and looked at it. It is fastened, it has always been fastened, to my buttonhole, always the same buttonhole, at all seasons, by a long lace. I am still alive then. That may come in useful. The hand that had seized the hat and held it still I thrust as far as possible from me and caused to come and go in an arc. So doing, I watched the lapel of my greatcoat, and saw it open and close. I understand now why I never wore a flower in my buttonhole, though it was large enough to hold a whole bunch. My buttonhole was set aside for my hat. It was my hat that I beflowered. But it is neither of my hat nor of my greatcoat that I hope to speak at present, it would be premature. Doubtless I shall speak of them later, when the time comes to draw up the inventory of my goods and possessions. Unless I lose them between now and then. But even lost they will have their place, in the inventory of my possessions. But I am easy in my mind, I shall not lose them. Nor my crutches, I shall not lose my crutches either. But I shall perhaps one day throw them away, I must have been on the top, or on the slopes, of some considerable eminence, for otherwise how could I have seen, so far away, so near at hand, so far beneath, so many things, fixed and moving. But what was an eminence doing in this land with hardly a ripple? And I, what was I doing there, and why come? These are things that we shall try and discover. But these are things we must not take seriously. There is a little of everything, apparently, in nature and freaks are common. And I am perhaps confusing several different occasions, and different times, deep down, and deep down is my dwelling, oh not deepest down, somewhere between the mud and the scum. And perhaps it was A one day at one place, then C another at another, then a third the rock and I, and so on for the other components, the cows, the sky, the sea, the mountains. I can't believe it. No, I will not lie, I can easily conceive it. No matter, no matter, let us go on, as if all arose from one and the same weariness, on and on hoarding, until there is no room, no light, for any more. What is certain is that the man with the stick did not pass by again that night, because I would have heard him, if he had, I don't say I would have seen him, I say I would have heard him, I sleep little and that little in the daytime. Oh not systematically, in my life without end I have dabbled with every kind of sleep, but at the time now coming back to me I took my doze in the daytime and, what is more, in the morning. Let me hear nothing of the moon, in my night there is no moon, and if it happens that I speak of the stars it's inadvertently. Now of all the noises that night not one was of those heavy uncertain steps, or of that club with which he sometimes smote the earth until it quaked. How agreeable it is to be confirmed, after a more or less long period of vacillation, in one's first impressions. Perhaps that is what tempers the pangs of death. Not that I was so conclusively, I mean confirmed, in my first impressions with regard to – wait—C. For the wagons and carts which a little before dawn went thundering by, on their way to market with fruit, eggs, butter and perhaps cheese, in one of these perhaps he would have been found, overcome by fatigue or by discouragement, perhaps even dead. Or he might have gone back to the town by another way too far away for me to hear its sounds, or by little paths through the fields, crushing the silent grass, pounding the silent ground. And so at last I came out of that distant night, divided between the murmurs of my little world, its dutiful confusions, and those so different (so different?) of all that between two suns abides and passes away. Never once a human voice. But the cows, when the peasants passed, crying in vain to be milked. A and C I never saw again. But perhaps I shall see them again. But shall I be able to recognise them? And am I sure I never saw them again? And what do I mean by seeing and seeing again? An instant of silence, as when the conductor taps on his stand, raises his arms, before the unanswerable clamour. Smoke, sticks, flesh, hair, at evening, afar, flung about the craving for a fellow. I know how to summon these rags to cover my shame. I wonder what that means. But I shall not always be in need. But talking of the craving for a fellow let me observe that having waked between eleven o'clock and midday (I heard the angelus, recalling the incarnation, shortly after) I resolved to go and see my mother. I needed, before I could resolve to go and see that woman, reasons of an urgent nature, and with such reasons, since I did not know what to do, or where to go, it was child's play for me, the play of an only child, to fill my mind until it was rid of all other preoccupation and I seized with a trembling at the mere idea of being hindered from going there, I mean to my mother, there and then. So I got up, adjusted my crutches and went down to the road, where I found my bicycle (I didn't know I had one) in the same place I must have left it. Which enables me to remark that, crippled though I was, I was no mean cyclist, at that period. This is how I went about it. I fastened my crutches to the cross-bar, one on either side, I propped the foot of my stiff leg (I forget which, now they're both stiff) on the projecting front axle, and I pedalled with the other. It was a chainless bicycle, with a free-wheel, if such a bicycle exists. Dear bicycle, I shall not call you bike, you were green, like so many of your generation, I don't know why. It is a pleasure to meet it again. To describe it in detail would be a pleasure. It had a little red horn instead of the bell fashionable in your days. To blow this horn was for me a real pleasure, almost a vice. I will go further and declare that if I were obliged to record, in a roll of honour, those activities which in the course of my interminable existence have given me only a mild pain in the balls, the act of blowing a rubber horn would figure among the first. And when I had to part from my bicycle I took off the horn and kept it about me. I believe I have it, still, somewhere, and if I use it no more, it is because it has gone dumb. Even motor-cars have no horns today, as I understand the thing, or rarely. When I see one, through the lowered window of a stationary car, I often stop and blow it. This should all be rewritten in the pluperfect. What a rest to speak of bicycles and horns. Unfortunately it is not of them I have to speak, but of her who brought me into the world, through the hole in her arse if my memory is correct. First taste of the shit. So I shall only add that every hundred yards or so I stopped to rest my legs, the good one as well as the bad, and not only my legs, not only my legs. I didn't properly speaking get down off the bicycle, I remained astride it, my feet on the ground, my arms on the handle-bars, my head on my arms, and I waited until I felt better. But before I leave this earthly paradise, suspended between the mountains and the sea, sheltered from certain winds and exposed to all that Auster vents, in the way of scents and langours, on this accursed country, it would ill become me not to mention the awful cries of the corncrakes that run in the corn, in the meadows, all the short summer night long dinning their rattles. And this enables me, what is more, to know when that unreal journey began, the second last but one of a form fading among fading forms, and which I here declare without further ado to have begun in the second or third week of June, at the moment that is to say most painful of all when over what is called our hemisphere the sun is at its pitilessmost and the arctic radiance comes pissing on our midnights. It is then the corncrakes are heard. My mother never refused to see me, that is she never refused to receive me, for it was many a long day since she had seen anything at all. I shall try and speak calmly. We were so old, she and I, she had had me so young, that we were like a couple of old cronies, sexless, unrelated, with the same memories, the same rancours, the same expectations. She never called me son, fortunately, I couldn't have borne it, but Dan, I don't know why, my name is not Dan. Dan was my father's name perhaps, yes, perhaps she took me for my father. I took her for my mother and she took me for my father. Dan, you remember the day I saved the swallow. Dan, you remember the day you buried the ring. I remembered, I remembered, I mean I knew more or less what she was talking about, and if I hadn't always taken part personally in the scenes she evoked, it was just as if I had. I called her Mag, when I had to call her something. And I called her Mag because for me, without my knowing why, the letter g abolished the syllable Ma, and as it were spat on it, better than any other letter would have done. And at the same time I satisfied a deep and doubtless unacknowledged need, the need to have a Ma, that is a mother, and to proclaim it, audibly. For before you say mag you say ma, inevitably. And da, in my part of the world, means father. Besides for me the question did not arise, at the period I'm worming into now, I mean the question of whether to call her Ma, Mag or the Countess Caca, she having for countless years been as deaf as a post. I think she was quite incontinent, both of faeces and water, but a kind of prudishness made us avoid the subject when we met, and I could never be certain of it. In any case it can't have amounted to much, a few niggardly wetted goat-droppings every two or three days. The room smelt of ammonia, oh not merely of ammonia, but of ammonia, ammonia. She knew it was me, by my smell. Her shrunken hairy old face lit up, she was happy to smell me. She jabbered away with a rattle of dentures, and most of the time didn't realize what she was saying. Anyone but myself would have been lost in this clattering gabble, which can only have stopped during her brief instants of unconsciousness. In any case I didn't come to listen to her. I got into communication with her by knocking on her skull. One knock meant yes, two no, three I don't know, four money, five goodbye. I was hard put to ram this code into her ruined and frantic understanding, but I did it, in the end. That she should confuse yes, no, I don't know and goodbye, was all the same to me, I confused them myself. But that she should associate the four knocks with anything but money was something to be avoided at all costs. During the period of training therefore, at the same time as I administered the four knocks on her skull, I stuck a bank-note under her nose or in her mouth In the innocence of my heart! For she seemed to have lost, if not absolutely all notion of mensuration, at least the faculty of counting beyond two. It was too far for her, yes, the distance was too great, from one to four. By the time she came to the fourth knock she imagined she was only at the second, the first two having been erased from her memory as completely as if they had never been felt, though I don't quite see how something never felt can be erased from the memory, and yet it is a common occurrence. She must have thought I was saying no to her all the time, whereas nothing was further from my purpose. Enlightened by these considerations I looked for and finally found a more effective means of putting the idea of money into her head. This consisted in replacing the four knocks of my index-knuckle by one or more (according to my needs) thumps of the fist, on her skull. That she understood. In any case I didn't come for money. I took her money, but I didn't come for that. My mother. I don't think too harshly of her. I know she did all she could not to have me, except of course the one thing. and if she never succeeded in getting me unstuck, it was that fate had earmarked me for less compassionate sewers. But it was well-meant and that's enough for me. No it is not enough for me, but I give her credit, though she is my mother, for what she tried to do for me. And I forgive her for having jostled me a little in the first months and spoiled the only endurable, just endurable, period of my enormous history. And I also give her credit for not having done it again, thanks to me, or for having stopped in time, when she did. And if ever I'm reduced to looking for a meaning to my life, you never can tell, it's in that old mess I'll stick my nose to begin with. the mess of that poor old uniparous whore and myself the last of my foul brood, neither man nor beast. I should add, before I get down to the facts, you'd swear they were facts, of that distant summer afternoon, that with this deaf blind impotent mad old woman, who called me Dan and whom I called Mag, and with her alone, I—no, I can't say it. That is to say I could say it but I won't say it, yes, I could say it easily, because it wouldn't be true. What did I see of her? A head always, the hands sometimes, the arms rarely. A head always. Veiled with hair, wrinkles, filth, slobber. A head that darkened the air. Not that seeing matters, but it's something to go on with. It's I who took the key from under the pillow, who took the money out of the drawer, who put the key back under the pillow But I didn't come for money. I think there was a woman who came each week Once I touched with my lips, vaguely, hastily, that little grey wizened pear. Pah. Did that please her? I don't know Her babble stopped for a second, then began again Perhaps she said to herself, Pah. I smelt a terrible smell. It must have come from the guts. Odour of antiquity. Oh I'm not criticising her, I don't diffuse the perfumes of Araby myself Shall I describe the room? No. I shall have occasion to do so later perhaps. When I seek refuge there, bet, all shame drunk, my prick in my rectum, who knows Good Now that we know where we're going, let's go there. It's so nice to know where you're going, in the early stages. It almost rids you of the wish to go there. I was distraught, who am so seldom distraught, from what should I be distraught, and as to my motions even more uncertain than usual. The night must have tired me, at least weakened me, and the sun, hoisting itself higher and higher in the east, had poisoned me, while I slept. I ought to have put the bulk of the rock between it and me before closing my eyes. I confuse east and west, the poles too, I invert them readily. I was out of sorts. They are deep, my sorts, a deep ditch, and I am not often out of them. That's why I mention it. Nevertheless I covered several miles and found myself under the ramparts. There I dismounted in compliance with the regulations. Yes, on entering and leaving town the police compel cyclists to dismount, cars to go into bottom gear and horsedrawn vehicles to slow down to a walk. The reason for this regulation is I think this, that the ways into and of course the ways out of this town are narrow and darkened by enormous vaults, without exception. It is a good rule and I observe it meticulously, in spite of the difficulty I have in advancing on my crutches pushing my bicycle at the same time. I managed somehow. Being ingenious. Thus we cleared these difficult straits, my bicycle and I, together. But a little further on I heard myself hailed. I raised my head and saw a policeman. Elliptically speaking, for it was only later, by way of induction, or of deduction, I forget which, that I knew what it was. What are you doing there? he said. I'm used to that question, I understood it immediately. Resting, I said. Resting, he said. Resting, I said. Will you answer my question? he cried. So it always is when I'm reduced to confabulation, I honestly believe I have answered the questions I am asked and in reality I do nothing of the kind. I won't reconstruct the conversation in all its meanderings. It ended in my understanding that my way of resting, my attitude when at rest, astride my bicycle, my arms on the handlebars, my head on my arms, was a violation of I don't know what, public order, public decency. Modestly I pointed to my crutches and ventured one or two noises regarding my infirmity, which obliged me to rest as I could, rather than as I should. But there are not two laws, that was the next thing I thought I understood, not two laws, one for the healthy, another for the sick, but one only to which all must bow, rich and poor, young and old, happy and sad. He was eloquent. I pointed out that I was not sad. That was a mistake. Your papers, he said, I knew it after a moment. Not at all, I said, not at all. Your papers! he cried. Ah my papers. Now the only papers I carry with me are bits of newspaper, to wipe myself, you understand, when I have a stool, oh I don't say I wipe myself every time I have a stool, no, but I like to be in a position to do so. if I have to. Nothing strange about that, it seems to me. In a panic I took this paper from my pocket and thrust it under his nose. The weather was fine. We took the little side streets, quiet, sunlit, I springing along between my crutches, he pushing my bicycle, with the tips of his white-gloved fingers. I wasn't—I didn't feel unhappy. I stopped a moment, I made so bold, to lift my hand and touch the crown of my hat. It was scorching. I felt the faces turning to look after us, calm faces and joyful faces, faces of men, of women and of children. I seemed to hear, at a certain moment, a distant music. I stopped, the better to listen. Go on, he said. Listen, I said. Get on, he said. I wasn't allowed to listen to the music. It might have drawn a crowd. He gave me a shove. I had been touched, oh not my skin, but none the less my skin had felt it, it had felt a man's hard fist, through its coverings. While still putting my best foot foremost I gave myself up to that golden moment, as if I had been someone else. It was the hour of rest, the forenoon's toil ended, the afternoon's to come. The wisest perhaps, lying in the squares or sitting on their doorsteps, were savouring its languid ending, forgetful of recent cares, indifferent to those at hand. Others on the contrary were using it to make their plans, their heads in their hands. Was there one among them to put himself in my place, to feel how removed I was then from him I seemed to be, and in that remove what strain, as of hawsers about to snap. It's possible. Yes, I was straining towards those spurious deeps, their lying promise of gravity and peace, from all my old poisons I struggled towards it, safely bound. Under the blue sky, under the watchful gaze. Forgetful of my mother, set free from the act, merged in this alien hour, saying, respite, respite. At the police station I was a very strange official. Dressed in plain-clothes, in his shirt-sleeves, he was sprawling in an arm chair, his feet on his desk, a straw hat on his head and protruding from his mouth a thin flexible object I could not identify. I had time to become aware of these details before he dismissed me. He listened to his subordinate's report and then began to interrogate me in a tone which, from the point of view of civility, left increasingly to be desired, in my opinion. Between his questions and my answers, I mean those deserving of consideration, the intervals were more or less long and turbulent. I am so little used to being asked anything that when I am asked something I take some time to know what. And the mistake I make then is this, that instead of quietly reflecting on what I have just heard, and heard distinctly, not being hard of hearing, in spite of all I have heard, I hasten to answer blindly, fearing perhaps lest my silence raise their anger to fury. I am full of fear, I have gone in fear all my life, in fear of blows. Insults, abuse, these I can easily bear, but I could never get used to blows. It's strange. Even spits still pain me. But they have only to be a little gentle, I mean refrain from hitting me, and I seldom fail to give satisfaction, in the long run. Now the sergeant was content to threaten me with a cylindrical ruler, and was repaid, little by little, by the discovery that I had no papers in the sense this word had a sense for him, nor any occupation, nor any domicile, that my surname escaped me for the moment and that I was on my way to my mother, whose charity kept me dying. As to her address, I was in the dark, but knew how to get there, even in the dark. The district? By the slaughterhouse your lordship, for from my mother's room, through the closed windows, I had heard, stilling her chatter, the bellowing of the cattle, that violent raucous tremulous bellowing not of the pastures but of the towns, their slaughterouses and cattle-markets. Yes, after all, I had perhaps gone too far in saying that my mother lived near the slaughterhouse, it could equally well have been the cattle-market, near which she lived. Don't worry, said the sergeant, it's the same district. I took advantage of the silence which followed these kind words to turn towards the window, blindly or nearly, for I had closed my eyes, proffering to that blandness of blue and gold my face and neck alone, and my mind empty too, or nearly, for I must have been wondering if I did not feel like sitting down, after such a long time standing, and remembering what I had learnt in that connection, namely that the sitting posture was not for me any more, because of my short stiff leg, and that there were only two postures for me, the vertical, drooping between my crutches, sleeping on my feet, and the horizontal, down on the ground. And yet the desire to sit down came upon me from time to time, came back upon me from a vanished world. And I did not always resist it, forewarned though I was. Yes, my mind felt it surely, this tiny sediment, incomprehensibly stirring like grit at the bottom of a puddle, while on my face and great big Adam's apple the air of summer weighed and the splendid summer sky. And suddenly I remembered my name, Molloy. My name is Molloy, I cried, all of a sudden, now I remember. Nothing compelled me to give this information, but I gave it, hoping to please I suppose. They let me keep my hat on, I don't know why. Is it your mother's name, said the sergeant, it must have been a sergeant. Molloy, I cried, my name is Molloy. Is that your mother's name, said the sergeant. What? I said. Your name is Molloy, said the sergeant. Yes, I said, now I remember. And your mother? said the sergeant. I didn't follow. Is your mother's name Molloy too? said the sergeant. I thought it over. Your mother, said the sergeant, is your mother's—Let me think! I cried. At least I imagine that's how it was. Take your time, said the sergeant Was mother's name Molloy. Very likely. Her name must be Molloy too, I said. They took me away, to the guard-room I suppose, and there I was told to sit down. I must have tried to explain. I won't go into it. I obtained permission, if not to lie down on a bench, at least to remain standing, propped against the wall. The room was dark and full of people hastening to and fro, malefactors, policeman, lawyers, priests and journalists I suppose. All that made a dark, dark forms crowding in a dark place. They paid no attention to me and I repaid the compliment. Then how could I know that they were paying no attention to me and how could I repay the compliment, since they were paying no attention to me? I don't know. I knew it and I did it, that's all I know. But suddenly a woman materialized before me, a big fat woman dressed in black, or rather in mauve. I still wonder today if it wasn't the social worker. She was holding out to me, on an odd saucer, a mug full of a greyish concoction which must have been green tea with saccharine and powdered milk. Nor was that all, for between mug and saucer a thick slab of dry bread was precariously lodged, so that I began to say, in a kind of anguish, It's going to fall, it's going to fall, as if it mattered whether it fell or not. A moment later I myself was holding, in my trembling hands, this little pile of tottering disparates, in which the hard, the liquid and the soft were joined, without understanding how the transfer had been effected. Let me tell you this, when social workers offer you, free gratis and for nothing, something to hinder you from losing consciousness, which with them is an obsession, it is useless to recoil, they will pursue you to the end of the earth, the vomitory in their hand. The Salvation Army is no better. Against the charitable gesture there is no defence, that I know of. You sink your head, you put out your hands all trembling and twined together and you say, Thankyou, thankyou lady, thankyou kind lady. To him who has nothing it is forbidden not to relish filth. The liquid overflowed, the mug rocked with a noise of chattering teeth, not my teeth, I had no teeth, and the sodden bread sagged more and more. Until, panic-stricken, I flung it all far from me. I did not let it fall, no, but with a convulsive thrust of both my hands I threw it on the floor, where it smashed to smithereens, or against the wall, far from me, with all my strength. I will not tell what followed, for I am weary of this place, I want to leave this place. It was late afternoon when they told me I could go. I was advised to behave better in future. Conscious of my wrongs, knowing now the reasons for my arrest, alive to my irregular situation as exposed by the enquiry, I was surprised to find myself so soon at freedom once again, if that was what it was, unpenalized. Had I, without my knowledge, a protector in high places? Had I, without knowing it, favourably impressed the sergeant? Had they succeeded in reaching my mother and obtaining from her, or from the neighbours, partial confirmation of my statements? Were they of the opinion that it was useless to prosecute me. To apply the letter of the law to a creature like me is not an easy matter. It can be done, but reason is against it. It is better to leave things to the police. I dont know. If it is unlawful to be without papers, why did they not insist on my getting them. Because that costs money and I had none? But in that case could they not have appropiated my bicycle? Probably not, without a court order. All that is incomprehensible. What is certain is this, that I never rested in that way again, my feet obscenely resting on the earth, my arms on the handlebars and on my arms my head, rocking and abandoned. It is indeed a deplorable sight, a deplorable example, for the people, who so need to be encouraged, in their bitter toil, and to have before their eyes manifestations of strength only, of courage and of joy, without which they might collapse, at the end of the day, and roll on the ground. I have only to be told what good behaviour is, and I am well behaved, within the limits of my physical possibilities. And so I have never ceased to improve, from this point of view, for I—I used to be intelligent and quick. And as far as good-will is concerned, I had it to overflowing, the exasperated good-will of the over-anxious. So that my repertory of permitted attitudes has never ceased to grow, from my first steps until my last, executed last year. And if I have always behaved like a pig, the fault lies not with me but with my superiors, who corrected me only on points of detail instead of showing me the essence of the system, after the manner of the great English schools, and the guiding principles of good manners and how to proceed, without going wrong, from the latter to the former, and how to trace back to its ultimate source a given comportment. For that would have allowed me, before parading in public certain habits such as the finger in the nose, the scratching of the balls, digital emunction and the peripatetic piss, to refer them to the first rules of a reasoned theory. On this subject I had only negative and empirical notions, which means that I was in the dark, most of the time, and all the more completely as a lifetime of observations had left me doubting the possibility of systematic decorum, even within a limited area. But it is only since I have ceased to live that I think of these things and the other things. It is in the tranquillity of decomposition that I remember the long confused emotion which was my life, and that I judge it, as it is said that God will judge us, and with no less impertinence. To decompose is to live too, I know, I know, don't torment me, but one sometimes forgets. And of that life too I shall tell you perhaps one day, the day when I know that when I thought I knew I was merely existing, and that passion without form or stations will have devoured me down to the rotting flesh itself, and that when I know that I know nothing, I am only crying out as I have always cried out, more or less piercingly, more or less openly. Let me cry out then, it's said to be good for you. Yes, let me cry out, this time, then another time perhaps, then perhaps a last time. Cry out that the declining sun fell full on the white wall of the barracks. It was like being in China. A confused shadow was cast. It was I and my bicycle. I began to play, gesticulating, waving my hat, moving my bicycle to and fro before me, blowing the horn, watching the wall. They were watching me through the bars. I felt their eyes upon me. The policeman on guard at the door told me to go away. He needn't have, I was calm again. The shadow in the end is no better than the substance. I asked the man to help me, to have pity on me. He didn't understand. I thought of the food I had refused. I took a pebble from my pocket and sucked it. It was smooth, from having been sucked so long, by me, and beaten by the storm. A little pebble in your mouth, round and smooth, appeases, soothes, makes your forget your hunger, forget your thirst. The man came towards me, displeased by my slowness. Him too they were watching, through the windows. Somewhere someone laughed. Inside me too someone was laughing. I took my sick leg in my hands and passed it over the frame. I went. I had forgotten where I was going. I stopped to think. It is difficult to think riding, for me. When I try and think riding I lose my balance and fall. I speak in the present tense, it is so easy to speak in the present tense, when speaking of the past. It is the mythological present, don't pay any heed to it. I was already settling in my raglimp stasis when I remembered that it wasn't done. I went on my way, that way of which I knew nothing, qua way, which was nothing more than a surface, bright or dark, smooth or rough, and always dear to me, in spite of all, and the dear sound of that which goes and is gone, with a brief dust, when the weather is dry. There I am then, before I knew I had left the town, on the canal-bank. The canal goes through the town, I know I know, there are even two. But then these hedges, these fields? Don't torment yourself Molloy. Suddenly I see, it was my right leg, the stiff one, then. Toiling towards me along the tow-path I saw a team of little grey donkeys, on the other bank, and I heard angry cries and dull blows. I got down. I put my foot to the ground the better to see the approaching barge, so gently approaching that the water was unruffled. It was a cargo of nails and timber, on its way to some carpenter I suppose. My eyes caught a donkey's eyes, they fell to his little feet, their brave fastidious tread. The boatman rested his elbow on his knee, his head on his hand. Every three or four puffs, without taking his pipe from his mouth, he spat into the water. The horizon was burning with sulphur and phosphorous, it was there I was bound.

translated from the french by
p. w. bowles

samuel beckett

Change of Address:

Readers are requested to note that the editorial address of merlin is now:

The English Bookshop,
47, rue de Seine,
Paris 6.e

Tel. ODE 97-86

sad saturday of a wavering gentile

(Noblesse oblige...)

Herr Schneuzer, labial tenterhook's delight,
Born to a dank and rosy, full of race,
Sets down the borrowed noise, and now upright
Adorns once more his slowly cloying face.

Herr Schneuzer, when disturbed by other cares,
Bemoans the beds in which they might have lured him,
And writhes again when morning's fancy stares
Through buttercups, as though it might have cured him.

Herr Schneuzer toward the day's too tender places
Sends gallantly his doughty coursers crying;
But, at a thought of willful girls and braces,
He lets his garter slip, and stops replying.

jared shlaes

a trial in dream

Dreamer, there are no synonyms
For that white dress you grasped
So beautifully in sleep.
                    The church whisperer,
Slanderer, aisle-lounger
Dosing into incense fantasy
Saw you lean to her,
Reaching
          in such double dream
A temple. She was not fallen then.
And yet he spoke, hounding the evil
From us, making the town clean,
And death in every street.

martin seymour-smith

BRASSAI

Four Wall Faces

a folio

Brassai, Hungarian by birth, Parisian by adoption, probably knows Paris better than any one of the city's four million natives. During the twenty five years he has photographed varied aspects of Parisian life, he has explored meticulously all of its quarters and milieux.

A painter and sculptor first, a photographer second, Brassai was probably the first to adopt the camera lens to the exigencies of the veritable artist. Each of his photographs is a creative work, inimitable even by himself His collection of Paris prototypes — newsvendors, ragpickers, concierges, *clochards*, society figures, music hall performers, prostitutes — are known throughout the world. Less known are a series of creations by the Paris walls themselves, captured and recorded by the ever-observing eye of the artist.

"Da Vinci, in his *Journals*, remarked that he never walked through the streets of any city without paying particular attention to the walls," says Brassai. "And Paris is a city of extraordinary walls." These walls, that people pass by a hundred times without noticing, or that, when remarked, are merely deplored for their sombre squalidness, have always attracted him: for their graffiti, for the way they have flaked and cracked into strange and often beautiful patterns.

richard seaver

angina pectoris

If half my heart is here, doctor,
The other half is in China
In the army descending towards the Yellow River.
And every morning, doctor,
Every morning at dawn,
My heart is taken out and shot in Greece.
And when the prisoners fall asleep,
When the last steps die away from the hospital,
My heart goes off, doctor,
Off to an old wooden house in Istambul.
And for the last ten years, doctor.
I have had nothing in my hands to offer my poor people
Nothing but an apple
A red apple, my heart.
It is because of all this, doctor.
And not because of arterio-sclerosis, nicotine, and prison,
That I've got this angina pectoris.
I look at the night through the bars
And in spite of all these walls that weigh upon my chest
My heart beats in time with the most distant star.

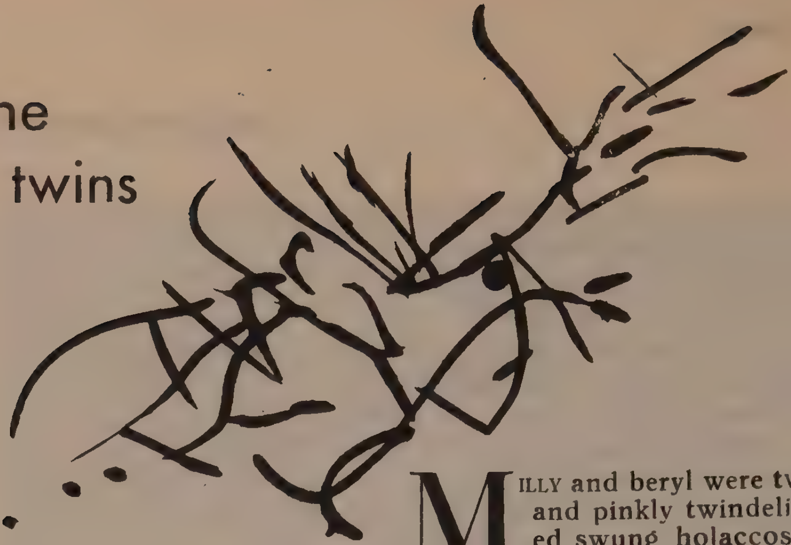
the voyage

The voyage is made on a coal-steamer
Is there a single port in which we have not yet struggled?
Is there a single sadness of which we have not yet sung?
The horizon we saw each morning over our prow
Did we not see it each evening in our wake?
How many stars have trooped before us
Brushing the waters.
Was not every dawn the reflection
Of our great nostalgia?
We continue in spite of everything, we continue on our way.

translated by
christopher hancock

nazim hikmet

the twins



Milly and beryl were twins and pinkly twindelighted swung holaccosting hips and yaws in walking, swimming seldom, sitting morely, running rarely, gartering their shofts with ribands only, elushtic surely, not from caution; for all weals syme mare fairly polarposing indented sorely in nomansland (w)hen shewing barely on a prottigal. A rosy line on barley fatter dentifriced on fur, a tartar, helderàdos brands farsades, wick these quincunx amplay had, lemanpitted taken hindspread while the other countess sugarloaves or samwixes. A rose is a rose is a ruse and everichwen they went they curried it, in sitting morely, and when they sat urnburial in sheaves, yellowingotaman, demurely, with currents and resins is a rose. Wuz sum sam said lived on the smailovitch but he wuz no maid. They castor nets in pollockshields or shaws on long sumerian nights a reedmarch under moon, a rose romaunce, until knut riety a beau of beryls and irish swede god ruffiantuff and lugalgirrla into the neighbour room with oats and blasphemies, and milly, bugger of the two, went nillywilly with the tongs and laid him out that laid the smout so ruddely; and then the quincunx took either end of knut the rioter and bore him to the street where noman was nor walked nor sawyer deid, the ruby flax, the shingle at his oyster, and millospoidit said: abdul be rain tonight, and beryl replied: let it come doon, no bullul hear.

Now in the dusky close knut riety seemed deid whose lewd designs abused the roses sleep, two months a celibate, alarmed on his klaxonskull by tongs, by milly strook, thus with his gaping face, his eyeballs staring wide, drew his last breath on christ, and died.

But christ in cunx endured, on lip, in apposition with the evidential stiff, and is ariz a rosy artifice for barrowing thence the ramrod limbs of knut umbrellowing from his trunk or rosacrushing part now poised upon a wheel to move the doer dun a distance from their door, and being questioned then, a friend of yours? would answer: nay, it's knut, and never saw the man; thus did them this fore dawn, retired, and rosabot tomtit before the day did rosary.

Two pairoseats in carnal counterpoint they moved their merryhulls an place of rosidance, unlike in parts, the big the small, the fat the thin, of thigh, of hip, of diaphragm; the implication of their silhouette was polyhet variety – except the hair, on both the hair was red; except the urge, alike for both ig minutiæ: to wit, in smell, in nod, in wink, in bed (their flanks dihedral); fur sum sam said the hair bespoke the urge, the urge the eye, the eye the man, the man the tongs that drew the blood that knut spilt.

They castor nets anew on sugarhill, bissom called mary after magdelene, encuntering in lanes a genteel clientèle, lothariong him who there was vulturing, a brace of sloops decked out for kings, red and ready for a captaining. Who calftained them? Why, tom and dick and (by the lord) harry! With what result? Contrapuntally, viz: who captained milly was raised, commanding such a poseidon as to see a pacific spread whitely under sun, eyefar indeed, glued firm ats bilges, whereas, who captained beryl neptuned a lake, limited, but steamering superior, sam gumitted, if more or less constrictedly, having sowestered sororfully himself on more than one kippering (but that clandestine and privily with milly running 14 degrees to port bulkily eldoradoing other sheets like a sleeping whale as duetaefilly insisterntly he sailed). In short, incunxity variety.

Milly and beryl were hoarse and as the gentle rain from heaving wist not ponce where it falls they favoured none as stars will shed their polar light across an hemisfear their eyes or orbs encompassed more than appetit in finity, however fine, however fit, their quiddity, a femur frail or rib and garlanded and adipose for fingering soon tires and resolves itself into jew, and thus in sunlit hours they bowered it to sleep away the pentapcost of knights and squarepeg squires, the demon dings and dongs that bat their belfries con, and to all inpants and porpoises and witlouts ejaguarating there was fume inesfree tween goosengandering.

Well, the flange and curt of it was sam creased her massive centrale moving his carcassone through her pairoknees and into her softs pain encuntering no antagony, indeed, he sat his faction all round and they talked terms and turkey con jug and con nub and all; god speed, beryl said, when without ranchor sam was nested. Thus sam left con to go millandering and they were wedlock stock and beryl, nun the less, made shifts in peach meant for the bridal bed which bland isisments cozed sam to buss haress soong as occasion was prescented, witches tokay, milliner cups, and beryls perianth flaunted, deuterowngamey spright sam nuptial in the bud that knight errantry.

This state of afflowers might have persistered indefinitely twin yokes for scrambling had not a lankeylookin galoot of bitter class cult eccles seeded his beryl and belted it hotfoot for india before the sweats and ultimate expulsion. Thus came eileen to be as beryl to be not in the grey granite of the duke street maternity.

alisdair hart

the meeting

That girl, out of habitat
Of known south suns,
Waited near the Norman rocks
For a strange bird to come.
No bird of gold familiarity,
But a messenger, strapped
With the Northern news
And full of rain.
I saw them in one gray instant
Together, her dress fluttering
Over him, her brown hand
Moving urgently for the paper,
And his ascent above
Her swift disappearance.
Two courriers, met
At this compassless dark coast.
Ah, curious, and out of memory of
No child's bright country.
Just in time had her arm
Pulled the cold bird down,
For there was blood humming
Blindly along the neighboring bushes.

gloria elliffe

the immoral proposition

(poems)

by

Robert Creeley

illustrated in pen and ink by ***Rene Laubies***

Jonathan Williams Publisher, Highlands, North Carolina

CHRONICLES of the clandestinite:

notes for an homage

"If it be a civilized society you want, the intellect must be free to deal as it pleases with whatever comes its way, it must be free to choose its own terms, phrases, and images, and to play with all things what tricks it will"

— Clive Bell, Civilization

Another burden for our overladen times. *A new writer*, Donatien-Alphonse François first le Marquis and later le Comte de Sade (1740-1814) has just been discovered again. The paradox begins at the outset. For if any writer were ill-suited to the colleges and the pocket editions, little apt to meet the new criticism's specifications or more contemptuous of its opinion, unlikely, in a word, to cut a pretty figure at the dance or add his blessings to the good fight, it is this divine comedian, this "monster author" (1)— one of

> *those perverse writers whose corruption is so dangerous, so active, that their single aim is, by causing their appalling doctrines to be printed, to immortalize the sum of their crimes after their own lives are at an end; they themselves can do no more, but their accursed writings will instigate the commission of crimes, and they carry this sweet idea with them to their graves: it consoles them for the obligation, enjoined by death, to relinquish the doing of evil.*
>
> [Justine ou les Malheurs de la Vertu]

Sade's work, rigorously and for sound reason suppressed under the Directory, the Empire, the Regency, the several Republics, has served as fuel to the bonfires common sense has lit for one hundred and fifty years. Perfectly suited for the *auto-da-fé* seeming to aspire to nothing else—*"Mais pourquoi suis-je aussi affreux, et pourquoi le crime est-il si charmant? Il m'immortalise, il faut le faire régner dans le monde"* (2)—, actually burned in effigy at

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(1) "It has been said that as a child his countenance was so charming ladies would pause to gaze upon him He had a round face, blue eyes, curly blonde hair. His movements were of a perfect grace, and his harmonious voice contained accents which used to touch women's hearts."—Apollinaire. (A list of references is provided in the sequel.)

(2) L.—A. Pitou, *Analyse de mes malheurs et de mes persécutions depuis vingt-six ans*, cited by Apollinaire. "During the eighteen months I spent at Sainte-Pélagie in 1802 and 1803, while awaiting my *lettres de grâce*, I was in the same corridor occupied by the famous Marquis de Sade, author of the most execrable work human perversity has ever invented. That wretch was so infected by the leprosy of the most inconceivable crimes that the authorities had found him unfit for the scaffold; lower even than a beast, he had been ranked amongst the maniacs: justice, neither wishing to have its archives soiled by this creature's name, nor wishing to have the executioner's blade cause him to obtain the celebrity of which he was so avid, had relegated him to a corner of the prison, the while giving everyone else detained there the permission to rid it of this burden."

Aix-en-Provence, Sade and his incomparable fictions, sunk, buried in darkness and interdiction, have, rather than perished, existed as a kind of infernal legend, sacred to those conscious of living in what is sometimes called a dying culture, meaningful only to those who have accepted the idea of civilization's mortality. Speak of Sade, who himself speaks of the general collapse, and one must speak of the rest: of the others, who are, it seems, beginning to consult him in greater and greater numbers. He has almost become popular. Why?

For one is led to wonder just what the British and above all the American reader, at heart still far from a convinced Manichaean, will make of Sade now that it has become possible to obtain a glimpse (3) of him in broad daylight—Sade whom certain reputable judges have declared among the greatest figures of the Enlightenment, among its greatest enemies.

Murder supposes a complicity between knifeblade and throat.

* * *

Directly, as we are only too well aware, one examines a novel or a poem in terms of what it is not, in terms of anything but itself, one commits a sacrilege or a grave mistake as one denies its autonomy, reduces it by relating it to and making it dependent upon something else, upon something foreign, extra-literary, and vile. To do this is to go about things badly if one pretends to respect literature, which one cannot very well do unless one consents to assign literature—an institution like any other—an importance. While admitting, then, the risks run when an author is scrutinized and evaluated in terms of his times or his weight or his dolorous childhood, tested for his loyalty or purity or manners, we are also aware that the scrutinizer, however much he wishes to partake of the divinity he imputes to the work, always does his close reading of the text through institutional eyes whose vision is by no means unaffected by his own times: its loyalties, its purities, its manners, and his own Reading, after all, supposes an intersubjectivity too. Now, when it is a question of Sade, at exactly what may one look? what object is there to attain, to consider, to assimilate? The books, even in France, are scarcely obtainable; few readers are able to penetrate the barriers erected before the *Bibliothèque Nationale*'s reserve. Nothing resembling faithful or complete versions of Sade can, under present circumstances, be printed, much less openly sold and circulated in England and the United States. Sade, who violates all our rules, seems an exception to them, as he is a stranger to our institution. Strictly speaking there are no writings, no visible writings of the Marquis de Sade: none, that is to say, save out of the public domain and in the other called the *clandestinité*. But there is a legend, irritating and undistrainable; the books diffuse it; a certain sensibility, as well as crime's progress, immortalizes it; the books may be destroyed or witheld, the legend sticks while that sensibility endures, persisting where there is a *clandestinité*—and the *clandestinité* is also an institution which now withers, now flourishes, depending upon circumstances, upon what indeed reigns in the world.

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(3) Not much more than a glimpse is afforded by *The Marquis de Sade*, a recent American anthology of Sade's writings, edulcorated by omissions and the appropriate devices, and prefaced by Simone de Beauvoir's earnest, lengthy, biographically useful "Faut-il brûler Sade?"

One might compare Sade's style to Laclos', his irony to Voltaire's, describe his similarity to Swift, his fondness for Richardson, his use of Rousseau; one might reconstruct the development of his thinking and his theogony, one might demonstrate his influence, indirect but powerful, upon Dostoievski, upon Nietzsche, or relate his political science to Machiavelli's; one might be able to prove that if modern psychology owes much to Freud, Freud owes no less to Sade—one might do these things, most of which have already been done, but finally—and whoever has undertaken a serious appreciation of Sade has been compelled to—one should have to situate in order properly to identify him: it is first of all his fugitive identity that provides his interest. An exception, he fits within no category; his great effort is to burst categories; his importance is provocative: he forces his reader to desert the comfortable sphere of "reason" and "general truths" and "order" for a realm of fulgurating, hallucinating irregularity. And precisely when his reader does feel discontent with this sphere, when he finds the sane, normal, everyday attitudes unjustifiable or wanting or aleatory, then it is

> *So much the worse for those whom large ideas corrupt; so much the worse for them who only know how to fasten upon what is harmful in philosophic opinions, who are apt to be corrupted by everything. Who knows? they may have been poisoned by reading Seneca or Charron. It is not to them I speak; I only address myself to people capable of hearing me out, and they will read me without danger.*
>
> [La Philosophie dans le boudoir]

To be sure, all great writers have, to some degree and often despite themselves, regretfully and painfully, exercized a critical function: sometimes by explicitly attacking "false values", popular illusions and "myths" with the physician's hope of correcting limps, instigating "reforms" and bringing people back to those healthy "senses" from which they have momentarily strayed; sometimes, with greater modesty, by dramatizing failure, or absurdity, or contradiction, or hypocrisy, and in this case employing the comparative device, but still appealing to a basically firm judgment; sometimes by embodying crisis, by personifying tragically what is disjointed or infirm and by intimating its normal character—in this case, it would be God whom the Romantic invites to judge. During the nineteenth century, particularly in France, the artist's *mauvaise* *conscience* (4) was as real as his particular historical sense was keen. He had but to look about him: the compact unity of society, the validity of a language "everyone" understood (or of a literary convention everyone forgave), of an integrity ensured by solidarity with others, or at least by the firmness of empire and currency, all this was over; frantic adventures and armed divisions had replaced it, and the artist was adrift, unhappy, poor, and suspect. As a writer attached to the very flesh of the *ancien régime* and its patronage, attached to a dead tradition and its language, and a creature inculpated in his anarchical, valueless, unsatisfactory and unsure times, a Flaubert and his followers had necessarily to concern themselves with failure. The great realist was able to see himself in a foolish adultress, wedded to impotence and victimized by —indistinguishable from—meaninglessness. *Madame Bovary,* like *Salammbô,* a descriptive novel, is a magnificently superficial one; it is a formal success, and it is with appearances, with forms it deals; if any criticism is implicit in it (and I find no more or less in *Bovary* than in *Bouvard et Pécuchet*), that criticism is formal. Whence Emma's "mistakes"—her plight is determined by accumulated accident, by the mass of external "things as they are" of which she is wholly a part; actually, a silly, "empty" creature, she is unable to make mistakes; for she is scarcely an individual, but rather a modern personage, inseparable from the rest of what is modern, neither good nor bad nor choosing, simply hollow, bound to be more modern, further used, and probably a little different tomorrow. There is nothing of a more substantial, a more profound error here, nothing—despite the blind man and his unintelligible

(4) It derives, perhaps, from something as simple as the inability to justify oneself as a producer, as someone productively employed, legitimately engaged in work—this in an age, like our own, spellbound by the Marxist gorgon. Thus, suggests Maurice Nadeau (in a review of Roland Barthes' excellent essay, *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*), thus the stylists, obsessed with the desire to write "well-wrought" books, "wished to make it clear they worked intensely and long upon form, as if they were eager to turn form into a 'work-value'." What an immense difference between these machine-age specialists or "craftsmen" and Sade who was impervious to all these fastidious concerns and at the same time as lucid an economist, and as pessimistic a demographist, as was to be found in his century. It is from the proletariat, of course, from that "vile class" destined for annihilation, the capitalist Saint-Florent (in *Justine*) draws the persons—"the raw material"—he sacrifices to his lust. "Furthermore, the species of subject is of infinite importance to my lubricity: I must have them all got from those asylums of misery where the need to live and the impossibility of managing to do so eat away courage, pride, delicacy, finally rot the soul, and, in the hope of an indispensable subsistence, steel a person to undertake whatever appears likely to provide it. I have all these nests ransacked, all these dungheaps combed pitilessly: you've no idea what they yield; still better, *Thérèse*, I say that civil activity, industry, manufacture, a little social ease would stalemate my subornations and divest me of a great proportion of my subjects: I combat these perils with the influence I enjoy in this city, I promote commercial and economic *fluctuations* or instigate the rise of prices which, enlarging the poverty-stricken class, depriving it, on the one hand, of possibilities of work and on the other rendering difficult those of survival, increases according to a predictable ratio the total of the subjects misery puts into my hands. The strategy is a familiar one, *Thérèse:* those scarcities of wood, dearths of wheat and other edibles wherefrom Paris has been trembling for so many years, have been created for the identical purposes which animate me: avarice, libertinage: such are the passions which, from the gilded halls of the rich, extend a multitude of nets to ensnare the poor in their humble dwellings."

motions (the prophet is dumb in the modern world)—analogous to an "evil according to nature", to an original explanatory fault, one of the grain, of the soul. For here, once again, there is no fault, no grain, no soul. Thus, one may say that Flaubert, however much the Goncourts would have him under Sade's influence, was very far from absolutely despairing, and that his criticism, or portrait, is conditional; all is not lost; all is not bad; merely vacant, negligible. Sade, on the other hand, endowed even the most banal existence with dignity, with fulness, and his limitless condemnation of it thereby finds its mark. He was afflicted by no *mauvaise conscience;* he was never tempted to declare, upon beholding the ordinary others, that they were "dans le vrai." In his view, "things as they are" were essentially wrong, everything associated with those things attainted, the whole scheme doomed; his repudiation of it was total; he wished to have done with it all. His world of organized massacre is strange, extreme, because it was intended to be the opposite of what our common sense causes us to believe is our world. And yet, we discern something more than familiar in Sade's terrible construction; it has to do not with cause and effect, with just government, enlightened self-interest, with improved standards of living, collective security, mutual understanding, planned economies, predictable behaviour, or human rights, but with the other, the darker and more secret side of things.

* * *

Sade's life has been thoroughly traced elsewhere; but it might be helpful briefly to indicate his beginnings before even more briefly sketching some of his ideas. (5)

He once maintained that

> *It is in the womb of the mother that are fashioned the organisms which render us susceptible of such and such a fancy; the first objects chance presents, the first conversations overheard determine the pattern; whatever it may be, subsequent education alters nothing.*
>
> [La Nouvelle Justine]

—a passage that recurs again and again when Sade strives to account for the libertine's conduct.

> *What living man would not instantly revise his tastes, his affections, his penchants and bring them into harmony with the general scheme, what man, rather than continue a*

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(5) For Sade's life, see Gilbert Lely, *Vie du Marquis de Sade,* for a chronology, see that drawn up by Maurice Heine. The best introductions to Sade's systematic thinking are Blanchot's essay in *Lautréamont et Sade* (an English translation of which was included in the final number of Horizon) and Klossowski's second essay, "Esquisse du système" in *Sade mon prochain*

> *freak, would not prefer to be like everyone else, were it in his power to do so. The man endowed with uncommon tastes is sick; if you prefer, he is like a woman with hysteric dizziness. Has the idea to punish either of them ever occurred to us? let us be equally fair when dealing with the man whose caprices surprise us; perfectly like unto the sick man or the female dizzard, he is, like them, deserving of sympathy and not of blame; that is the moral apology for the persons whom we are discussing; a physical explanation will without doubt be found as easily, and when the study of anatomy reaches perfection they will without any trouble be able to demonstrate the relationship of the human constitution to the tastes which it affects Ah, you pedants, hangmen, turnkeys, lawmakers, you shavepate rabble, what will you do when we have arrived there? what is to become of your laws, your ethics, your religion, your gallows, your Heavens, your Gods, your Hell when it shall be proven that such a flow of liquids, this variety of fibres, that degree of pungency in the blood or in the animal spirits are sufficient to make a man the object of your givings and your takings away?*
>
> [Justine]

Not much is known of Sade's life; the contemporary accounts which mention him are mainly police records; no picture of him exists; he seems to have been equally shunned by his fellow-writers and by polite society—which was at its most polite in Louis' *Parc aux cerfs*. Certain parts of Sade's epistolary novel, *Aline et Valcour*, seem autobiographical; here is one which might refer to his earlier years:

> *Through my mother allied to all that was great in the kingdom, through my father attached to all that was distinguished in the province of Languedoc, born in Paris, in the midst of luxury and abundance, I thought, as soon as I reached the age of reason, that Nature and fortune had combined to shower their gifts upon me; I believed it because others were stupid enough to tell me so, and this ridiculous notion made me proud, despotic, and ill-tempered; it seemed to me that everything was duty-bound to yield to me, that the whole universe was there to flatter my caprices, and that I had merely to form in order to satisfy them.* (6)

By the time he was fifteen, he had completed twenty months of training and was commissioned *sous-lieutenant* in the King's Infantry; at seventeen he leaves for the war with Prussia:

> *The campaigns began, and I dare say I comported myself well in them. That native impetuosity of character, that fiery spirit I had received from Nature only contributed a greater degree of strength and activity to the ferocious virtue called courage – a virtue very mistakenly beheld as the only one necessary to our state.*
>
> [Aline et Valcour]

(6) Cited by Lely in his chapter on the Marquis' childhood.

At nineteen, the young man's misconduct creates a breach between himself and his father for whom Sade seems to have had a great affection. In a letter—chronologically the earliest of Sade's known texts (7)—the Marquis begs the Abbé Amblet to speak in his favor to his parents and help bring about a reconciliation. He reviews and deplores his adventures; he promises to put a stop to them. He breaks his promise: by 1763 the rake's notoriety is securely established: he has the worst reputation as a gambler, a debauchee, a spendthrift. While his family negotiates his marriage with Mlle de Montreuil, Sade carries on an affair with a Mlle de Lauris whom, beyond any doubt, he loved and in a strictly orthodox sense. But in May of 1763 he cedes to his parents' pressure and, reluctantly, weds Renée-Pélagie Cordier de Montreuil, although at the eleventh hour he expresses a preference for her younger sister whom later, furthermore, he was to seduce. Once married against his will, the Marquis begins to retaliate: the disgraces multiply: his revenge, half compulsive, half intentional, is to soil himself and hence his line and estate. Five months after his marriage he is arrested after some serious carousing in a brothel and detained in the Vincennes donjon. Thereafter, "notre petit Priape" breathes exclusively impure air: successive detention, after the Rose Keller affair, at Saumur, the fortress of Pierre-Encise near Lyon, the Conciergerie, the debtors' prison at For-l'Evêque, the château de Miolans... Pursued (above all by his mother-in-law), continually in flight when not in jail, banished from the company of his peers, always extravagant, always in debt, Sade says he has tried every means to reform himself but is persuaded none has a chance of success: "j'ai toujours été plus malheureux que coupable" (letter of July 18, 1778) (8). One of his correspondents, Mlle de Rousset (in a letter of October 21, 1780), concurs: "Enfin, mon cher ami, il est des individus si baroquement organisés qu'ils inspirent plus de pitié que de colère." Two years later, Sade writes to Mlle de Rousset, avowing that "Si ma situation a des épines, il faut avouer cependant qu'elle suggère souvent des pensées d'un genre de philosophie bien plaisante."

Meanwhile, in prison, Sade was inventing his dark universe; meanwhile, the Revolution was being prepared.

> *... you supposed you were performing a marvel, I dare say, when you had me reduced to an atrocious abstinence in what concerns* sin and the flesh. *Well, you were mistaken You have made me create phantoms I shall have to realize. That was beginning to happen anyhow, and it will only be that much nicer to start in all over again. When one turns up the fire under the pot you know very well it has got to boil over.*

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(7) Lely, pages 66-7. Sade also wrote a letter to his father (Lely, pages 68-71) describing his strangely hermetic life in the army camp at Obertistein in Germany—this document dates from 1760.

(8) *Correspondance inédite du Marquis de Sade*, edited by Paul Bourdin.

The example of the Revolution provided a circumstantial sanction to an impulse that previously existed suspended in affective hypotheses. The shock of crisis wrenched into its maturity an until then by no means completely formed personality, and imposed the need for doctrine; the larger convulsion fixed its seal upon the particular infamy. Revised by the Revolution, the society which had excluded Sade was now taking the form of a colossal orgy. It had made crime a law, it would perhaps justify, perhaps authenticate the *necessity* of a mode of existence—libertine existence—that was, according to an obsolete morality the *grands seigneurs* had mocked, unjustifiable and, according to an obsolete system whose rules the *grands seigneurs* had made a habit of violating, criminally irregular. But now, in this natural world of natural men demanding their natural rights and moved by natural laws, crime appeared to be what Nature commanded; Nature, the new god of the Age of Reason, replaced the old virtuous one of the Age of Faith. Such, proposes Pierre Klossowski, may have been the reflections that guided Sade's thinking as, in one cell after the other, he lay brooding over the privileged creature of his dreams: the absolutely unimprisoned and unimprisonable, the completely free "integral man of polymorphic sensibility" whose advent he was eager to have the Revolution introduce.

Minski is an example of the chosen. Exposed to a liberal education, become conscious of a "universe not vast enough for the scope of my desires" and no longer willing to "vegetate in the depths of a benighted province", he set out on his travels, to continue his improvement. The sensible young man, "born a libertine and a debauchee, impious, bloodthirsty and ferocious", learned in Africa that "depravity is never but the natural condition of man"; in America, he hunted men; in Asia, he acquired a taste for their flesh. He imitated the crimes of the polite societies he visited, and the atrocities of the barbaric ones; when he brought his "dangerous penchants" back with him to Europe, he was condemned to be "burned in Spain, broken in France, hanged in England, drawn in Italy: however," he adds, "my wealth spared me these embarrassments." By now completely "formed" he sought a place of retirement in Tuscany: "I wanted an unusual, a rustic, a mysterious locale where I could surrender myself to every one of my imagination's whims"; their satisfaction called for elaborate furnitures and a numerous retinue: "I have," he explains, "two harems;"

> *the first contains two hundred little girls, aged from five to twenty: when they are sufficiently mortified by the operations of my lechery, I eat them. Two hundred women from twenty to thirty are in the second—you will see how I treat them. Fifty valets of either sex are employed to look after this considerable number of objects... for purposes of recruitment I have one hundred agents scattered throug hall the world's great cities. I am a monster vomited forth by Nature, put here to coöperate in the destructions she requires. I am a creature unique in my species, a—oh yes! I am familiar with all the invectives whereby they gratify*

> *me; but, powerful enough to depend upon no one, wise enough to be pleased with my solitude, to detest all of mankind, to defy its censures and to laugh at its sentiments for me, well enough instructed to demolish all worships, to sneer at all religions, to damned well do for all gods, proud enough to abhor every government, to put myself beyond every attachment, every restraint, every ethical principle, I am happy in my little domain. Here I exercize all a sovereign's rights, savor all despotism's pleasures; I fear no man. I live content. I have few visitors. None, as a matter of fact, unless, in the course of my promenades I run into someone who, like yourselves, seems to me to be of a sufficiently philosophical spirit to come and amuse himself a bit with me... The strength Nature has granted me allows me to make those outings very extensive... captures, thefts, burnings, murders, whatever strikes me as criminal, that's what I do...* [*Justice?*] *There is none in this country; that is why I settled down here: with money, you do what you please... and I spend a lot of money.*
>
> [La Nouvelle Justine]

* * *

The ideal universe which in each of his novels Sade endeavors to refine is the theatre of a terrific struggle for power, for absolute deliverance of all restraint and qualification, for absolute dominion at no matter what price: indeed, the heavier that price, the more appalling their ravages, the more absolute the supremacy of Sade's extraordinary heroes. They belong to the mythic race of Titans and Giants, possessed of superhuman urges and purpose, risen against every father, activated by an inexhaustible energy; it moves them to seek an exclusive existence; their greatness, their authenticity is measured by their ability to feel pleasure, to obtain pleasure which must be wrested from others, from their suffering. The ultimate pleasure is erotic, the ultimate proof of sovereignty is the power to subordinate all others—all men, all things, all creatures, the very stars, the gods that made them—to one's immeasurable, infinitely destructive and solitary joy. And so Sade's universe, electrified by terrible ambitions and hungers, charged with a positively transcendent ferocity, is one of hypostatized evil; of vice, not virtue, of disorder, not law, of violence, war, treason, licence, an airless, dark world periodically lit by lightning flashes of rage and desire; a world whence fidelity, faith, trust, generosity, decency, love are banished; here is crime only: arson, theft, murder, torture, incest, adultery, sodomy, rape, cannibalism, coprophilia, subornation, conspiracy, every impurity, every outrage, every corruption.

In those dozens of "little domains", whereof Minski's is typical, one finds a society divided into two castes: the monsters and the prey they batten upon. The arrangement is not entirely undemocratic, the simple hierarchy of consumer and consumed by no means rigid. Noble or mean birth need not determine station:

native vigor, the gift of Nature, is of capital importance, but the criminal temper may be acquired and has got to be preserved by assiduous cultivation and exercize; theft as well as inheritance may be the source of the "immense riches" necessary to procuring oneself pleasure and power, but the greatest treasure is the favor of Nature. Some of Sade's great criminals have risen to eminence from the foulest sewers—adversity is the most certain spur to rebellion—, and many of his victims are titled. Is there any formula to success? The prosperous Dubois counsels the wretched but good Justine:

> *'Tis not man's election of Virtue which brings him happiness, dear girl, for virtue, like vice, is nothing beyond a scheme for getting along in the world; 'tis not, hence, a question of adopting one course rather than another; 'tis merely a matter of following the road generally taken; he who wanders from it is always wrong; in an entirely virtuous world, I would recommend virtue to you, because worldly rewards being associated therewith, happiness would infallibly be connected with it too; in a totally corrupt world, I would never advise anything but vice. He who does not walk along with others has inevitably to perish; everyone he encounters he meets in head-on collision and, as he is weak, he has necessarily got to be crushed. 'Tis in vain the law wishes to re establish order and restore men to righteousness; too unjust to undertake the task, too insufficient to succeed in it, those laws will lure you away from the beaten path, but only temporarily; never will they make man abandon it. While the general interest of mankind drives it to corruption, he who does not wish to be corrupted with the rest will therefore be fighting against the general interest; well, what happiness can he expect who is in perpetual conflict with the interest of everyone else?*
>
> [Justine]

On the one hand Sade appears to have been a man plainly subject to self-destructive impulses, one who all his life courted disaster and who was gripped by as real a fear of freedom as that an Erich Fromm finds predominant in the psychology of selfless contemporary man anxious to take refuge in the arms of a totalitarian society; anxious only to obey a leader and dissolve himself in it makes no difference what higher service. On the other hand Sade, a much persecuted man who had forever to think of his own safety, never ceased to concert his escape and meditate upon an immunity it is entirely possible to view as a salvation. Like that of the mystic, his doctrine's point of departure is self interest; like a religious ascetic's, his exercize was founded upon a yearning for deliverance; even as the extremest of all atheists, his dialectic drove him to recognize a deity in order to assail it with blasphemy. Whether Sade was an atheist or only wore an atheist's mask makes little difference; if he viewed man as the measure of all things, the only human possibilities that counted for Sade were the most divine, the freest.

In order to survive in a competitive, strife-ridden society, he observed, one has got to injure others and, it must be assumed, they will reply in kind, if they are able. There is a natural sanction for crime; the universal prospect is of destruction; what else does Nature sanction and display if not suffering, death, disorder, cruelty? did she not design the universal scheme? does not all the evidence tend to indicate that she is pleased by nothing other than what men with transparent partiality call evil? that human compassion, benevolence, sympathy, even the propagation of species encroach upon her province and deprive her of the opportunity to manufacture new creatures which perversity, wickedness, vice in turn destroy? that this creation is the single joy Nature knows? that her creative lust requires infinite quantitiês of decomposed matter from which to fashion new beings? that there is no such thing as "death" or annihilation, but only mutation of forms, an efficient circulation of primary substance which, falling into her great crucible and springing up renewed again, is in incessant motion? that this process is upset by the pernicious conservative efforts of virtuous men, facilitated by the great destroyers—human killers, plagues, quake, famine, fire—who are Nature's agents? Is it not by her express ordination there are strong and weak: masters and slaves: Nature's elect and her enemies: the few pitted against the many, the many weak depressed to the last level of misery, the few strong raised to the level of gods?

> *Ah, Juliette! how delicious are the pleasures ot the imagination! All the world is ours in these wonderful moments; not a single creature resists us, we devastate the world, we repopulate it with new objects we immolate in their turn. The means to every crime belongs to us, we use, we exhaust all, everything, we increase the horror an hundredfold.*
>
> [La Nouvelle Justine]

That is our sublime duty; Nature and our desires bid us to fulfil it. For others, all others stand leagued against you; they have what they take to be their interest to consider, their bodies to protect: all men are born into an ineluctable isolation, all their relations are aggressive, all their intentions murderous. These, for Sade, are the "things as they are"; all the rest is artifice and dissimulation. Social contracts, conventions, laws, religions, "prejudices," Christian habits and slogans deceive no intelligent man, no philosopher allows himself to be their dupe; they are compensations for popular feebleness—they, together with notions of guilt, of justice, of conscience, of humaneness are the weapons the weak use to deter the strong who, once made to waver, are lost.

> *The false ideas we have of the persons surrounding us are still the source of an infinite number of erroneous moral judgments: we fabricate chimerical duties towards those persons, because it is believed that they bear some relation to us. We need but have the strength to renounce what we expect of others, and our obligations towards them evaporate at once. What, I ask you, what are all the creatures of*

> *a single one of our desires? and for what reason ought I deprive the least of those desires in order to please a creature, a person which is nothing to me, which interests me not in the slightest?...*
>
> [La Nouvelle Justine]

Sade often warns against hesitation, against scruple, against repentance and remorse and what is certain to result if the criminal permits his faculties and nerve to deteriorate. Obviously, he who wants intrepid courage or who has a delicate stomach is defeated in advance; but zeal and fire are not enough. No crime of passion has the value of the furtive, cold-blooded intellectual horror logically prepared and meticulously realized; the one betrays a dangerous enthusiasm and hints at fatal susceptibilities, the other denotes the callousness and industry of a mind that, while the hand is idle, keeps itself in a permanent state of viciousness and surexcitation. It is in moments of repose the criminal genius risks losing its fine edge; hence Sade suggests that one

> *do in a moment of sangfroid the very thing which, done in abandon, was able to afflict us with remorse. In this way, one clashes directly with virtue when it shows itself, and this habit of molesting it at the precise instant the senses' calm gives virtue the desire to appear, is one of the surest ways of annihilating it forever. Employ this secret, it will not fail you: as soon as a moment of quiet lets virtue rear itself in you, arriving in the form of remorse—for that is the guise it always wears in order to lay its grip upon us—, as soon as you perceive it, instantly do the thing you were going to regret...*
>
> [La Nouvelle Justine]

and with what regards the soul attributed to us—

> *because it is to their interest that we have one: the control they acquire over souls is the means whereby they do as they please with man*
>
> [La Nouvelle Justine]

—learn to cope with it by the cultivation of wath Sade calls apathy:

> *Stifle, extinguish your soul... seek to make pleasure of all that alarms, that affrights your soul: having soon brought this stoicism to perfection, you will sense a host of new pleasures born of apathy, delights very different from those you think are to be found in your baleful sensibility Do you suppose that in my infancy I had not a soul like your own? Well, I strangled its voice, and it is in this voluptuous callousness that I discovered the center of a multitude of deviations, of frenzies, and of lecheries which are worth far more than my weaknesses... I transformed my extravagant follies into principles, and from that moment I have known felicity...*
>
> [La Nouvelle Justine]

What happens when one of the elect is taken by the human justice he despises?

> *The true libertine loves his execrable actions even for the restitution of which they may someday be the cause. Have we not seen persons who loved the very tortures human vengeance prepared for them? who joyously submitted to those ordeals, who beheld the scaffold as the throne of glory whereupon they would have been furious not to have perished with the same unwavering courage that animated them in the committing of their crimes? There is the man who has reached the final stage of cultivated, meditated depravity.*
>
> [La Nouvelle Justine]

Or when a Minski meets his peer? A young woman, Amélie, confesses she "adores the savagery" of her friend, Borchhamps. "Swear to me," says she, "that I too will someday be your victim.

> *Since the age of fifteen my mind has been possessed by a single idea: to perish the victim of libertinage's cruellest passions I don't wish to die tomorrow--my madness doesn't go quite that far—; but only thus do I want to die. To become, as I expire, the occasion of a crime—that is a thought that sets me afire,"*
>
> [La Nouvelle Justine]

and Borchamps replies: "I love your mind to distraction; I think we'll do splendid things together."

Sade's fictional counterworld was articulated in stages; each of them marks a further advance in the profoundly dramatic emergence of an ideology that is at the same time an affective tonality. The desire motivating Sade's labors is to elaborate nothing short of an absolute world in which he will rule absolutely; that infinite desire gives rise to infinite possibilities, is founded upon possibility's infiniteness; in every one of its expressions, the project is an infinite failure and a further temptation; the imagination is forever a step beyond the science and strength needed to achieve its imperatives:

> *Is it possible to commit crimes as we have conceived them?... For my part, I declare that my imagination has always been in excess of my opportunities and means I have conceived a thousand times more than I have done: I have always had cause to complain of the Nature which, giving me the desire to outrage her, always robs me of the means.*
>
> [La Nouvelle Justine]

Condemned by their mortality, Sade's monsters speak a dirge:

> *We are limited to offending idols, creatures; but Nature is our quarry and she lies elsewhere. What I want is the power to outrage, to dislocate her scheme, to stem and reverse her career, to stop the circular flight of the stars, to overwhelm the spheres floating in space, to destroy what serves and*

> *protect what injures Nature, in a word, to insult her in her works—and I am unable to do all that.*
>
> [La Nouvelle Justine]

* * *

And who reads Sade?

Is it that we find in Sade's technology of evil the ancestor of our unmoral monolith of production and consumption? in his vertiginous nihilistic nostalgia a parallel to our chronic possession by some one or another great fit of death-wishing and death-making, ethnological messianism, or frenzied crusading? And the morbid pathology that reaches into every libre of what Sade has made—is it that we recognize the terrible pertinence of all he has to say? It is not so much that we are shocked by the licentiousness and cruelty in his works; we do not scorn it for pornography; it gives us no joy. We may see it as a grotesque evocation that is also an augury, a play-within-the-play; but today we can only murmur our disapproval of the bad news the messenger brings. Is it that the conditions Sade evokes correspond in a hundred crucial points to what we, as best we understand it (and we understand it best in our unconsciousness, in, Sade says, the dreams that deliver our instincts from the yoke of what civilization imposes), take to be the actual "historical truth"? What historical truth?

One has the definite impression—a false one perhaps; for everyone knows the world is divided in two, everyone knows everything has two faces—that, today, American intellectuals (the very active ones of the reviews, the missionaries entrusted with cultural portfolios) have never been more confident, better salaried, nor more eagerly heard. That, for them, this is a time of liberation, of awakening, of plenitude; that the melancholy night of estrangement and bitter faction is over; and that, today, the most genial ambiance, a *Gemültlichkeit* has taken its place. Literary criticism and avant-garde writing are now printed for the millions; all the millions are hard at work; Mr Hemingway has appeared in *Life*, mention of Mr Faulkner in presidential campaign speeches, Mr Koestler in *Collier's*, Mr Burnham almost everywhere; Mr Morgan buys Mr Tate's articles on the poet's responsibilities, Mr. Ford has enabled Mr Barzun to get back in touch with the French and Mr Trilling to assure the Europeans that America has found herself at last, a gin manufacturer has helped Mr Hook explain that America has a top-notch culture. Announcements of a renaissance and the happiest tidings proliferate in the little magazines, cascade from platforms, soar from round-tables, and give backbone to the world's only honest propaganda. The masses have grown up; the revolt is over. For Europeans—who are still admiring *Light in August, A Farewell to Arms, Miss Lonelyhearts, U.S.A., Winesburg, Ohio,* and who are apt to take the lost generation at its word—, for Europeans all this tends to be perplexing.

In France, a frivolous nation, the scene is precisely the contrary. No exuberance, little ease, little self-assurance; disarray, suspicion, occasional polemics, a lack of confidence. Since 1946 or 1947 Sade has enjoyed a revival in France (9); that is to say, conditions, notably those evoked by the Occupation and the *déchirure spirituelle* of the Defeat, have led directly to the renewal of interest in his message. The underground experience, of which the Resistance was a concrete but partial manifestation (10), seemed a necessary antecedent to re-examination of *Juliette* and *Les 120 Journées:* those novels interpret a nightmare of scandal, and they reader legitimate sentiments and behaviour twenty amnesties cannot dispel or pardon. Like that middle class of the Revolutionary period existing in a terror—for the most part moral—, the literate bourgeois (11) of today find in Sade the means to metamorphose, "to master its emotions and 'derive benefit' from them" (12): in other words, to become "real people": to obtain the "peace of mind" that comes as an aftermath of shock. Thus terror is turned to advantage; the process' final effect is a kind of serenity. A very precarious and strange serenity it is. One thinks not of the peace of the Augustans, but of the Roman twilight—of Tertullian, Augustine, Apuleius. Accompanied by a purgation and preceded by a surrender, that serenity is a compound of eroticism and weariness, watchfulness and abandon, reflection and indifference: and those are the words one might use to describe this period of *détente*.

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(9) A little like Jules Janin, Sade's nineteenth century critic, Edmund Wilson, talking of atomic bombs, has recently (in the *New Yorker*, October 18, 1952) expressed his hope that Sade's "moment is passing" and undertaken to explode the Sade myth—and has only succeeded in illustrating the prise virtually any myth may still exert upon an undespairing liberal Sade, concludes Wilson, is sick; Sade said so himself; that notion of the unregenerate exception seems to be what Wilson wishes to condemn when he describes the Marquis as a "compulsive neurotic of a violent and incurable kind"—and then, with there is no telling what motive, proceeds to build a case proving that Sade's personal conduct was sadistic. This is comparable to discrediting Zarathustra's prophecies by locating their origins in Nietzsche's syphillis; Kafka, Wilson has told us elsewhere, was not a very courageous fellow. "Sade's cardinal defect as a novelist was his infantile inability to transpose his erotic fantasies into terms of the real world"—this remark is explained by another: "The atrocities he loves to describe do not today seem as outrageous as they did at first." That, it seems to me, is exactly the point.

(10) As the fact recedes, one comes more and more to suspect that books like Vercors' do not as entirely record the profound sense of those years 1940—1945 as once we believed, and that a novel like Maurice Blanchot's *Le Très-Haut* or a little, little-read and thoroughly "interior" novel like Pierre Klossowski's *La Vocation suspendue* come closer to posing the question the Resistance writers, naturally enough, had no time to ask. Which is to say that it is harder than it once seemed to define "engagement" and decide which book, or author, is more "engaged" than some other. Might one not affirm that the clandestine writer and writing about the clandestine (Sade, Melville in *Benito Cereno*, Conrad in *The Heart of Darkness*, certain of James' fictions—"The Beast in the Jungle" comes to mind at once—, Italo Svevo in *La Ccscienza di Zeno*) is more engagé than Silone and *Pane e vino*, than Aragon and *Les Communistes?* The thing requires more than having a price on one's head, a gun in one's hand, and a tenderness for humanity in one's heart.

(11) Sade, a great libertine—like Prometheus or Sisyphus—, the "living definition of the free man, the single-handed generator of moral and political revolutions", "the man who manifests the highest example of that 'engagement' so painfully sought after today" (Nadeau) is also a pessimist: for a Marxist, a reactionary: the Communists do not endorse him

(12) Klossowski, *Sade mon prochain.*

How then, within conditions to all appearances so radically different, within an atmosphere dominated by what tends to vulgarize—to make the individual quit his particularity, renounce his interior preoccupations, confess, conform, exchange an identity only hazardously and even sinfully guarded for the protection afforded by a generalized inexistence—, how is to be measured and classified Sade's secret influence, until now operative and intact only because secret? How, without a metaphysics, is one to approach the incomparably scandalous writer who perhaps more than any other was moved by a desire for the absolute existence of absolute obscurity? whose message, seriously read if not applied, destroys the traditional categories, indeed the framework necessary to appraise him, and turns all this science, this classical logic, these substantial verities, these infallible methods into dust? Sade's sometimes impossibly tedious arguments (written, it sometimes seems, in response to the intolerable assurance of the *Encyclopédie,* written in denial of the *philosophes'* mechanistic theories and virtues; but written in the eighteenth century's own chosen form and vocabulary, reasonably, with measure, in coldblood advancing the deists', the rationalists', the materialists', the determinists' doctrines, thrusting them to their "logical" conclusions in chaos); the entirety of Sade's utterly gratuitous game translates the attitude of a man who failed of silence—barely failed of it—by yielding to another and equally powerful desire. Sade, of men one of "les plus rebelles et les plus rageurs qui aient jamais parlé de rébellion et de rage," succumbed to that fatal impulse to protest, to acknowledge the fact he was a victim, in order to express a sovereign hatred, to construct a huge system of negation. No greater, no more indefatigable, few more intelligent enemies of mankind and its works ever lived; few have ever known, or at least transcribed, a pathos as elevated as Sade's. No more vindictive, nor more subversive mind ever articulated its horror of that innocence, that naive and murderous hope which, today, seems about to yield the harvest Sade foresaw a credulous society would someday have to reap; and with what alarm an entire age would echo his "Corrigez-vous donc, car vous faites horreur"—there is a kind of dark humor here, to be sure: but our age is even better able to appreciate it than was Sade's.

It used to amuse Sade to whom, while sequestrated in asylums "surrounded by madmen and epilectics" and prevented from contaminating others, it occurred that, nothing being impossible, he might someday be read, better still, applauded by the deranged, by the suicides: in short, that he might be right and revenged after all, someday rehabilitated, but how? by whom? only by a humanity entering its hour of apocalypse and for a terrible season about to embrace that evil principle of which he aspired to be the advocate and herald. That proud man, Sainte-Beuve's "grand inspirateur de nos modernes," Maurice Heine's "curieuse personalité [qui] hante de plus en plus la littérature et la pensée contemporaine," the source to which Baudelaire felt one had, in one's search for an understanding of evil, constantly to return, Sade

> *would have—he must have—the explosion take place once and for all; the weed must be made to burgeon that the mind be able to uproot and consume it. In a word, evil must be made to reign one great and last time in the world in order that it be destroyed and Sade's spirit find peace at last.* (13)

What would we have? By what devices, what tricks, at what price? What civilized society?...

austryn wainhouse

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(13) Klossowski, *Sade mon prochain*

book reviews

Collected Poems: *by Archibald MacLeish, Houghton Mifflin. 1952, $4.*

The poems in this volume span thirty-five years and are, one must presume, those by which Mr. MacLeish would wish to be judged. For whether he likes it or not, and in *Sentiments For A Dedication* he states:

> I speak to my own time,
> To no time after,

a volume of this size is a tacit invitation to assessment.

Mr MacLeish is not, in fact, a memorable poet. The shorter poems, are primarily remarkable for their diversity of manner. Between *Baccalaureat* (the first one in the book), *March, Sketch For A Portrait Of Mme. G - D -* and *Hearts' And Flowers,* to select fairly at random from the first forty pages, there is no apparent relation for even the most devoted of textual commentators: what the relation is becomes clearer on second reading; they are all "in the manner of..." Yeats, the Imagists, Frost, Marianne Moore. Only one seems to me a tolerable poem, the *Sketch,* which does exhibit, behind the tired rhythms, a kind of sensible wit, admirably suited to the matter. The looping, inert sentences drone through their length to a pleasing formulation which might not have been arrived at any other way.

> ... then—
> The room made probable, made real, became
> As strangely visible as if it were
> The shape of something she was thinking of.

One *couldn't* multiply examples, as the saying is, but *Signature For Tempo,* with its "time-shaped people," and *Eleven,* with its Wordsworthian evocation of the bulb-bemused boy, can be advanced as examples, in their different ways, of this same unemphatic wit. *You, Andrew Marvell* is quoted in this connection often enough, but I don't see why (unless of course Marvell and 'wit'—MacLeish is lavish in Paris signposts pointing to Podunk.)

Where this slightly academic and delightful, undisturbing tidiness of humour gives way to full-blooded satire—*Empire Builders, Lines For An Interment,* for instance, or *Critical Observations*—then, like Humpty Dumpty, Mr. MacLeish comes and shouts it in our ear. It is presumably already clear that I judge Mr. MacLeish a minor poet. One experiences, as the volume proceeds, a sense of strain at his efforts to make himself a major one: the mantle of Whitman has fallen upon him. The satire disappears (though there is an Audenish revival of it in the comparatively recent *Actfive:*

> The Science Hero with the secret box—
> He that finds the key beneath the lake,
> Twists the riddle and unlocks
> All the golden answers. Take
> One! The apple? Right. Take two!
> Death? It's very good for you.)

and a form of messianism over. *Actfive* does contain some remarkable poetry, particularly in the first section, and the echoes from Eliot captivate rather than distract: MacLeish has a considerable power for communicating delight in, and a feeling of solidarity with, the cyclic annual world, and where his eye makes a broad sweep, unfettered by ideas he is not up to conveying over Man the peasant builder through time, he can write some fine lines. One thinks of the quite short *The Sheep In The Ruins,* where the simple, positive affirmation of buried courage and human potentiality is conveyed, unclogged by categories and the desire for comprehensiveness.

This comprehensiveness is a quality that needs defining. I find it in *The Waste Land* and *The Four Quartets* (to keep our terms of reference modern and mention a poet who has greatly influenced MacLeish). In both these very different poems, which reach universality *through* the personal, you can find an 'indictment of our civilisation' if you like: but with MacLeish you begin *and* end with it. There is little poetry.

There are three other long poems I should mention; *Conquistador,* first because most people know MacLeish, at least in England, by that epic. One is struck first, perhaps, by the unsubtlety of his rhythms. Nevertheless, the poem is full of splendidly vigorous, expressive, active lines. MacLeish's eye for colour and texture exults throughout it, but time and again the language is not only let down, it is nullified, by the circular motion and thud, round and round and thud, of each phrase of triplets. There is also the over-burdening with rapid laconic scenesetting:

The great heat of the sun on us:
neither shadow:
Neither shade of the cracked rock
in that canon:
The tree of the sun on our necks:
the burning saddle:
So we came to the strath's end:
lanterns:
Cricked walls: heaped plaster:
smell of the
Old men: of the straw: the dogs
scattering.

It is essentially undramatic, the sole protagonist being "we" (Diaz), and reads, after two books, like an interminable expansion by Gerontion of "bitten with flies fought." It is symptomatic of Mr. MacLeish's talent that I should feel some ungraciousness, even though recording my impressions as honestly as possible. There is quality here and God knows how much labour; but so there were in *Salammbô*.

In *The Pot Of Earth* and his *Hamlet,* four and seven years after *The Waste Land,* the limitations and strength of Mr. MacLeish show perhaps most clearly. Of the major works, these are the two that I prefer and the two that most irritate me.

Nowhere is MacLeish more openly derivative than in the first. Eliot's poem obviously offered him a possibility for organisation which so fascinated him that whem he came to crystallize his thoughts round an Adonis legend he found himself moving amongst echoes: the sheer weight of them, some brilliantly made over, others disconsolate left-overs from the other party, impedes any one now reading the poem from considering it as a whole. One is at a far remove from Pope's elegant borrowings or indeed Mr. Eliot's (which are at least more varied). And yet a lot of the poem does come through; what I have inaccurately called "solidarity with the cyclic annual world", a very genuine communication of the soil's slow germination and the body's parallel, which is something more than a parallel.

She could feel
Water along dry leaves and the
stems fill.

The movement is at times distinguished in this poem, a thrusting pattern on which the words can rely, as where the language itself is not specifically 'poetic':

Hot nights the whole room
reeked with the fetid smell
Of chestnut flowers, the live
smell, the fertile
Odor of blossoms. She half
drowsed. She dreamed
Of long hair fragrant with
almonds growing
Out of her dead skull, she
dreamed of one
Buried, and out of her womb
the corn growing.

The ending of the poem still seems disappointing, a gesture from Eliot, fogged by sentiment. *Hamlet,* is, I think, the most varied and flexible af all MacLeish's work. A succession of soliloquies, broken by the Worldplay, differently keyed, it *is* uneven. But when furthest from Eliot, particularly in sections 13 and 14, it is very fine indeed.

Show her your ow dead darling
whose young bones
Rot through the jelly of their
flesh beneath
This simpering pink rose...

"These poems are not only a *demonstration* of poetic craftsmanship, but also of a profound understanding of our times, by a man who, as journalist and author, Assistant Secretary of State and Librarian of Congress, has played an active part in shaping them". (Flyleaf) The italic is mine. Mr. MacLeish seems to me an unusual instance of a man who has read wisely and well and who, unfortunately, has on many occasions overstepped his talent. What is worst in this volume is frequently ,a testimony to the excellence of his reading and intentions. Nevertheless, when he writes within his powers, he produces some charming, some moving verse —*The Old Men In The Leaf Smoke, "Not Marble Nor The Gildéd Monuments"*—for which, in an age of poetasters, one must honour him and be grateful.

j. c.

New Russian Stories: *Edited & Translated by B. G. Guerney. New Directions.* $3.75.

This selection of sixteen stories contains something to please every taste. All are of a notably high literary calibre; almost all, contrary to general belief, are technically interesting in themselves. But it is remarkable that in this collection the subject matter is not once sacrificed to the whims of pure experimentation.

We in the western world, and especially in America, have a tendency to class as avant-garde all writing that in any way tries to escape the utter banality offered weekly by the mass circulation magazines. We have two distinct categories of literary outlets, the former just mentioned and the host of precariously existing literary magazines. If the former are discouraging by their endless and quasi-identical triteness, the latter more than often sin by an exaggerated effort to "make it new", to disregard, or at least neglect seriously, what the French call *fond,* to the apparent benefit of the form.

What strikes one most about this collection is the harmonious integration of these two factors. The result, as always, is good literature. At least half, and probably more of these pieces—admirably selected by Mr. B. G. Guerney, the translator—will assuredly become modern classics of the short story.

Is this unstinted approval intended to contradict the currently prevailing impression that Russia's post-revolution literature is of a generally inferior quality, in most instances little better than propaganda, sometimes artfully veiled, as often not? No, for two reasons: since "these stories were chosen for their artistry and readability, there is included no example of propaganda fiction" (flyleaf), and because the authors chosen are today, if living, in their late fifties or sixties, those who experienced the revolution at first hand and whose work was in no way state controlled. A similar selection of stories by Russian writers now in their thirties or forties would probably indicate this measure of change, the same change visible in the realm of the cinema from *Potemkin* or *The Mother* to *The Fall of Berlin.*

Among the best of the stories in the present volume are Grinevski's *The Ratcatcher,* a superbly grotesque, Poe-like tale, whose setting and general ambiance are worthy of Kafka's *The Castle,* Ruvim Fraerman's *The Expedition,* which relates with a realism as powerful and effective as any I have recently read the arduous trek of a small partisan band through the savage, unexplored wastes of Siberia, and Boris Vogau's *Big Heart,* perhaps, from the standpoint of stylistic perfection and story value, the finest of the pieces contained in this collection.

Such tales and sketches as Tynyanov's *Second Lieutenant Likewise,* Sobol's *The Last Expedition of Baron Feuhbel-Feuhtzenau,* Zozulya's *The Studio of Love-Your-Fellowman* and Zoshchenko's *The Sleuth Hound,* ranging from the merely clever to the excellently satirical, are a reminder that one of the Russian's prime qualities is the ability not only to laugh, but to laugh at himself, his institutions, his personal and nationalistic foibles.

The book also contains short selections, apparently hitherto unpublished, of Gorki, Alexis Tolstoi, Pasternak, more, one is inclined to believe, for the magic of the authors' names than the intrinsic value of the sketches chosen.

Mr Guerney's translations are, as far as one can judge, excellent. They read smoothly, with no trace of the translator's sometimes heavy hand. He is deserving of a vote of thanks for bringing us in contact again with a contemporary literature too little known, and, for reasons other than literary, unjustly neglected.

r s.

books received

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Watt: *by Samuel Beckett. Collection Merlin.* 17/6d.

The Waking, (Poems 1933-1953): *by Theodore Roethke. Dovbleday & Company.* $3.

Proensa: *by Paul Blackburn. The Divers Press.* $1.

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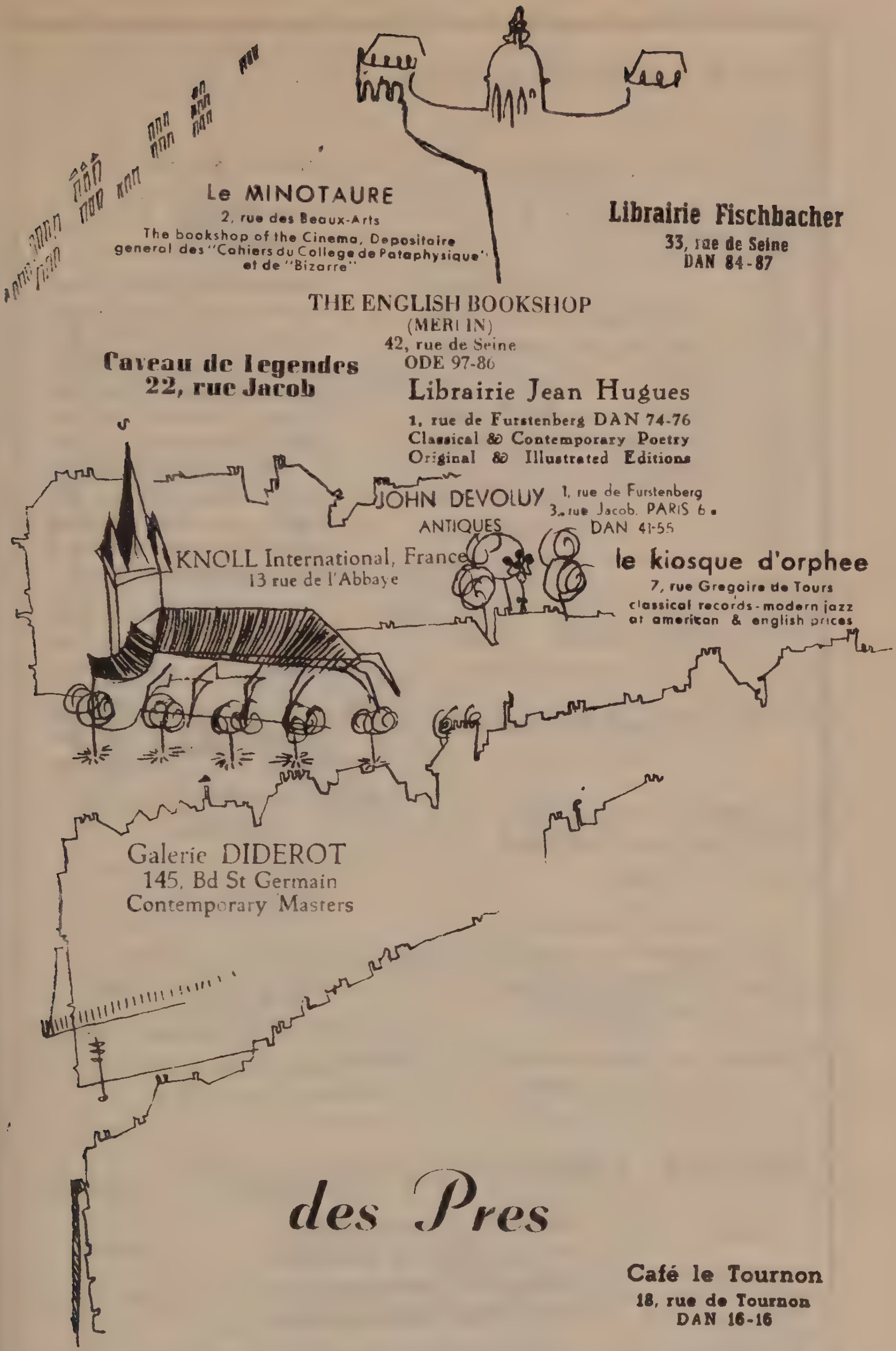

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editorial

words and war

IN relation to the East-West deadlock today, we find every pronouncement underrun with the stubborn implication that the statements and intentions of the other side are «wrong» or «evil»; of course. And each such pronouncement is little more than the deductive unfolding of implications already latent in an unscientific language in terms of which act and intention of the opposing side are to be described. Today, the person idly listening to the news-commentator speaking of «freedom-loving peoples» is unlikely to be immediately conscious of the implication that the other half of the world is teeming with swarms of «slavery-loving peoples». Indeed, he will miss the point by a hemisphere if he is unaware he is tuned into Radio Moscow.

But only in the hands of the Professors do these absurdities take on their grander proportions. Parallel with the political deadlock, and intensifying it, is a cultural one which finds expression in equally absolutist, aesthetic theories. Plainly, these, what gives rise to them, and what they give rise to, are the concern of the writer. In the present historical crisis, and in so far as through the various cultural media they contribute towards it, it is imperative that such theories be countered.

It is our contention that absolutism in the use of words, their hypostatization, is one of the prime progenitors of the present deadlock, for the simple reason that, on a cognitive level, it renders both agreement and disagreement impossible. The frustration aroused by the inability to get to intellectual grips with the opposing power bloc breeds suspicion and fear. Reason, operating on unverifiable and sometimes conveniently shifting assumptions, contributes illicitly to the moral armament of one block against the other. The literary theories to which we have referred are an extremely subtle and effective type of moral armament. Conflicting attitudes proliferate.

For the world to become sane, it must, among other things, become aware of the foundations and nature of absolutism. Only then is understanding possible. Only then can one know who, if anyone, is one's enemy. At that moment, and only then, can a sane man go to war.

Absolutism arises when empirical verification is treated lightly because propositions so verified can never be more than probable and when *a priori* «knowledge» is mistakenly treated as though it had factual content, i.e. when it is thought to be synthetic and not analytic or tautological. This confusion leads to the claim that it is possible to frame valid propositions that are neither empirically verifiable nor tautological; specifically, «metaphysical propositions», whose validity is capable of being apprehended intuitively. In one form or another, that is the main assertion of absolutism and it is one which, following the philosophic analysts, we reject entirely. While not denying that a scientific law may be conceived intuitively (a psychological question), we affirm that it can only be verified empirically (a logical question). The method of empirical verification adumbrated by science is the only method in terms of which man can, with even relative accuracy, determine whether the intellectual structures which he has built for himself have correlation with the world about him. All questions about matters of fact which are not amenable to scientific verification must inevitably be dismissed as mischievous. Man takes a most dangerous step when he endows the categories employed in such metaphysical statements with an inviolable existence of their own.

Besides the method of science, there is at least one other way, more or less imperfect, in which man might be said to attempt to «verify» his thinking about himself and the world: the way of art. Can we talk of the verifiability of art? Certainly not in the same way we can speak of the verifiability of science. The statements of science and the categories employed in them are neutrally descriptive. The statements of art and the categories employed in them contain an expressive, an emotional element which renders them, in the scientific sense of the word, «unverifiable».

In what way, then, can we speak of the «verifiability» of art? In what correlations does its peculiar validity reside?

We suggest that a work of art is a symbolization which combines both descriptive and expressive elements; that this complex has contact primarily with the emotional furniture of the individual; that the correlations, by which it is rendered valid or invalid, are with relatively permanent emotional structures in the human make-up. We suggest that it may be useful to distinguish between three correlations:

(*a*) the correlation between the descriptive-expressive complex as it exists in the artist's mind and his presentation of it in symbolic form (the realised work of art),

(*b*) the correlation between the exteriorized symbol and the descriptive-expressive complex it excites in the mind of the individual spectator (his experience of the work), and

(*c*) the correlation which we may suppose to result between the descriptive-expressive complexes of the two individuals (the communication established between artist and spectator).

At any moment in history, it is within an intricate and interpersonal complex of these correlations that the validity of a work of art will be said to subsist; in short, the so-called «value» of a work of art is relative and psychological. Art, presenting as it does symbols of emotively significant psychological states, seeking to exteriorize thereby the *affective* potential of the inner experience, does not and cannot at a cognitive level conflict with the neutral descriptions of science.

The hypotheses of science, their propositional elements, and such hypotheses and propositions which can in a like way be verified, constitute the only knowledge we can usefully call «true»; and even these are only probable and not absolute: they await revision through further experiment and its accessory speculation. We insist on the sanity of the recommendation that the use of the word «true» in other contexts be recognised as an expression of belief rather than of verifiable fact. It appears to us that this theory (a theory which, like those of science, recommends a tentative linguistic usage) has important implications. Its acceptance, as we shall attempt to demonstrate in the body of this essay, must discourage irresponsible and unfounded speculation, and specifically lead—for we are above all concerned with cultural matters—to the rejection of certain aesthetic theories which have become widely accredited, and which, in their attempt to impose arbitrary structures on history and on cultural process, past, present, and future, represent an imminent threat, parallel and confederate with the same kind of thinking in politics, to our civilisation.

(contd on page 209)

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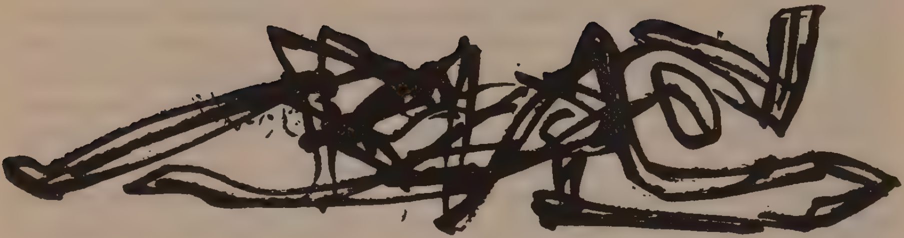


They dressed me and gave me money. I knew what the money was to be used for, it was for my travelling expenses. When it was gone, they said, I would have to get some more, if I wanted to go on travelling. The same for my shoes, when they were worn out I would have to have them repaired, or get myself another pair, or go on my way barefoot, if I wanted to go on. The same for my coat and trousers, needless to say, with this difference, that I could very well go on my way in my shirtsleeves, if necessary, particularly in warm weather, if I wanted to. The clothes were a pair of boots, a pair of socks, a pair of trousers, a shirt, a coat and a hat. They were not new, but the man must have been about my size. That is to say he must have been a little taller than I, and not quite so fat, for the clothes did not fit me so well at first as when I no longer needed them. They had no doubt shrunk a little during fumigation, especially the shirt, since for years I could not button it at the neck, nor consequently sport the collar that went with it. Yet I couldn't pin the skirts together, between my legs, as my mother had taught me. He must have put on his Sunday best to go to the consultation. It was probably the first time. All his life he had kept putting it off till the next day. Be that as it may, the hat was a square bowler, in very good shape. I said, Keep your hat and give me back mine. I added, Give me back my greatcoat too. They replied that they had burnt them, together with my other clothes. I understood then the end was near. Later on, I often tried to exchange this new hat for a cap, or a felt hat, which could be pulled down over my face, but without success.

And yet I could not go about bare-headed with my skull in such a state. For many years this hat was on the small side for me. They also gave me a tie, after long discussion. It seemed to be a pretty tie, but I didn't like it. When it came at last, I was too tired to send it back. But in the end it came in useful, as a belt. I didn't feel very strong, but they told me I was strong enough. They did not expressly say I was as strong as I would ever be, but that was implied. I lay inert on the bed, and it took three of the women to put on my new trousers. They did not seem to take much interest in my private parts. I didn't take much interest in them myself any more. But I felt they might have said something. When they had finished, I got up and put on the other clothes all alone. They told me to sit down on the bed and wait. All the bed-clothes had disappeared. I began to feel angry that they hadn't let me wait in the familiar bed, instead of standing on the hard floor, in these clothes that smelt of sulphur. I said, You might at least have left me in bed till the last minute. Men all in white came in, with mallets in their hands. They dismantled the bed and took away the pieces. One of the women followed them, to return soon after with a chair, which she set before me. I had done well to pretend I was angry. To think I had almost held my peace. But to show them how angry I was that they had not let me wait in the bed, I gave the chair a kick and sent it flying. At last, a man came in and I followed him. In the hall he gave me a paper to sign. What does this mean, I said, is it a safe conduct? No, he said, it's a receipt for the clothes and money you have received. What money? I said. It was then I received the money. To think I had almost gone off without a penny in my pocket. The sum was not large, but to me it seemed large. It was years since I had possessed such a sum, I must have been a raw youth at the time. I saw the familiar objects, companions of so many bearable hours. The stool, for example, dearest of all. The long afternoons together, waiting for it to be time to go to bed. There was even a hole for my cyst. At times I felt its wooden life invade me, till I myself became a piece of old wood. Then the window pane with the patch of frosting gone, where I used to press my eye in the hour of need, and rarely in vain. I am greatly obliged to you for these clothes, I said, and for this money, is there a law which prevents you from throwing me out naked and penniless? That would damage our reputation in the long run, he replied. Could they not possibly keep me a little longer, I said, I would help in the garden. Seriously, he said, you would be willing to help in the garden? A moment later he went on, If they really believed you were willing to help in the garden, or even in the kitchen, they would gladly keep you, I am sure. The kitchen! I cried. Why certainly, he said, we need help in the kitchen as well as in the garden. The number of times I had offered my help in the garden! And now was I to offer my help in the kitchen? I was so weak. Perhaps, I said, they would consent to take back the money and keep me a little longer. This is a purely charitable institution, he said, and the money is a gift they offer you when you leave. When it is gone, he said, you will have to get some more, as best you can. In any case, never come back here, you would not be let in. Don't go to any of our branches either, they would turn you away too. Exelmans! I cried. Come, come, he said, and anyway, no one understands half of what you say. I'm so old, I said. You are not so old as all that, he said. May I stay here just a little longer, I said, till the rain is over. You can wait in the cloister, he said, the rain will go on all day. You can wait in the cloister till six o'clock, when you will hear the bell. If anyone challenges you, you need only say you have permission to shelter in the cloister. Whose name will I give? I said. Mr. Weir, he said.

I had not been long in the cloister when the rain stopped and the sun came out. The sun was low in the sky and I reckoned it must be getting on to six. I stayed there looking through the archway at the sun as it went down behind the cloister roof. A man approached and asked me what I was doing. What do you want? were the words he used. I replied I had Mr. Weir's permission to stay in the cloister till six o'clock. But he came back immediately. He must have spoken with Mr. Weir in the interim, for he said, you must not loiter in the cloister now the rain is over. It is true Mr. Weir had said two things. He had said, You may stay in the cloister till the rain is over, and then, You may stay in the cloister till six o'clock. They were two completely different things, but he had said them thinking that they were the same thing, thinking the rain would go on all day, that it would still be raining when the bell rang. I could find no other explanation.

Now I was making my way through the garden. There was that strange light which follows a day of persistent rain, when the sun comes out and the sky clears too late to be of use to anyone. The earth makes a sound as of sighs, and the last drops fall from the emptied sky. A small boy, stretching out his hands and raising his head towards the blue sky, asked his mother the cause of that. Mama, Mama, he said. F..k off, she said. I suddenly remembered I had forgotten to ask Mr. Weir for a loaf of bread, of the kind known as a crown. I had as a matter of fact thought of that loaf during my conversation with Mr. Weir in the hall. I had said to myself, Let us first finish our conversation, then I'll make my request. I knew well they would not keep me. I would willingly have gone back, but I was afraid one of the men would stop me and tell me I would never see Mr. Weir again. That might have added to my sorrow. And anyway, I never turned back on such occasions.

In the street I lost my way several times. I had not set foot in this quarter for a long time, and it seemed greatly changed. Whole buildings had disappeared, the railings had changed position, and on all sides I saw, in huge letters, the names of tradesmen I had never seen anywhere else and which I would even have been at a loss to pronounce. There were streets where I remembered none, several of those I did remember had disappeared, and of the old familiar ones many had changed their names. The general impression was the same as before. It is true I did not know this town at all well. It was perhaps quite a different town.

I did not know exactly where I was supposed to be going. I had the great good fortune, more than once, not to be run over. My appearance made people laugh, with that hearty, jovial laughter so good for the health. By keeping the red part of the sky as much as possible on my right, I came at last to the river. Here all seemed, at first sight, more or less as I had left it. If I had looked more closely, I would doubtless have discovered many changes. And indeed I subsequently did so. But the general appearance of the river, flowing between its quays and under its bridges, had not changed. Yes, it still gave me the impression it was flowing in the wrong direction. I had observed it carefully, at all states of the tide, from the mouth far upstream, but always unsuccessfully. That's not true. The bench was still there. It was shaped to fit the curves of the seated body. It was beside a watering trough, gift of a Mrs. Maxwell to the city horses, according to the inscription. During the short time I rested there several horses took advantage of this monument. The iron shoes approached, and the jingle of the harness. Then silence. That was the horse looking at me. Then the noise of pebbles and mud that horses make when drinking. Then the silence again. That was the horse looking at me again. Then the pebbles again. Then the silence again. Till the horse had finished drinking or the driver deemed it had drunk enough. The horses were uneasy. Once, when the noise stopped, I turned round and saw it looking at me. The driver was looking at me too. Mrs. Maxwell would have been pleased if she could have seen her trough rendering such services to the city horses. Perhaps, from heaven, she did see, perhaps she looked down, at certain hours of our morning and evening, upon her trough, to while her time away. If so she must certainly have seen me. When it was night I took off my hat, which had been hurting me for some time. I longed to be under shelter again, in an empty place, closed and warm, with artificial light, an oil lamp, if I had my choice, with a pink shade for preference. From time to time someone would come to make sure I was all right and needed nothing. It was long since I had longed for anything, and the effect on me was horrible. How often I had tried to find rest in a hotel, in vain. If I had been in London, or thereabouts, I would have looked for something in the Euston-King's-Cross-Islington district. But I had never been in London.

In the days that followed I visited several lodgings, without success. They usually slammed the door in my face, even when I showed them my money and offered to pay a week in advance. It was in vain I put on my best manners, smiled and spoke distinctly, they slammed the door in my face before I could even finish my little speech. It was at this time I perfected a method of doffing my hat which was both courteous and discreet. I slipped it smartly forward, held it a second placed in such a way that the person to whom I was speaking could not see my skull, then slipped it back. To do that naturally, without creating an unfavourable impression, is no easy matter. When I deemed that to tip my hat would suffice, I naturally did no more than tip it. But to tip one's hat is no easy matter either, to tip one's hat without servility or insolence is not given to everyone. I subsequently solved this problem, of vital importance for me in time of adversity, by wearing a British Kepi and saluting in military fashion. This can't be true either, for I had my hat at the last. I never made the mistake of wearing medals. Some landladies were in such need of money that they let me in immediately and showed me the room. But I couldn't come to an agreement with any of them. Finally I found a basement. With this woman I came to an agreement at once. My oddities, that's the expression she used, did not alarm her. She nevertheless insisted on making the bed and cleaning the room once a week, instead of once a month as I would have preferred. She told me that while she was cleaning I could wait in the little yard. She added, with a great deal of understanding, that she would never put me out in bad weather. This woman was Greek, I think, or Turkish. She never spoke about herself. I somehow got the idea she was a widow. She had a queer accent. I talked queerly myself, the result of assimilating the vowels and omitting the consonants.

Now I didn't know where I was. I had a vague vision of a big house, four or five stories high. It seemed to me it was part of a block of houses. It was dusk when I got there, and I did not pay the same heed to the place as I would have if I had known it were to close about me. And by then I must have lost all hope of ever finding anything. It is true that when I left this house it was a glorious day, but I never look back when leaving. I must have read somewhere, when I was small, that it is better not to look back when leaving, and that had always been my own feeling. It seems to me that when leaving I should have seen something of the place, even without looking back. But there it is. All I remember is my feet emerging from my shadow, one after the other. My shoes had stiffened and the sun lit up the cracks in the leather.

I was comfortable enough in that house, I must say. Apart from the rats, I was alone in the basement. The woman did her best to respect our agreement. When I reprimanded her she took note of it. About noon she brought me a big tray of food, and took away the tray of the previous day. At the same time she brought me a clean chamber pot. The chamber pot had a large handle, which she slipped over her hand, so that both her hands were free to carry the tray. The rest of the day I saw no more of her, except sometimes when she peeped in to make sure I was all right and needed nothing. From my bed I saw the coming and going on the sidewalk. Some evenings, at the rush hour, when the weather was fine, I went with my chair into the little yard, and looked up into the skirts of the women passing by. In this way I got to know more than one leg. Once I sent for a crocus bulb and planted it in the dark little yard, in an old pot. It must have been coming up to spring, to judge by the light, and it was probably not the right time. I left the pot outside, attached to a string I passed through the window. In the evening when the weather was fine a little light crept up the wall. Then I sat down beside the window and pulled on the string to keep the pot in the light, and in the warmth. I manured it as best I could and made my water on it when the weather was dry. It sprouted leaves, but never any flowers. I would have liked to have a yellow crocus, but there, it was not to be. What irritated me most was the din of the newspaper boys. They went running by every day at the same hours, their heels pounding on the sidewalk, crying the names of their papers and even the headlines. The house noises disturbed me less. A little girl, unless it was a little boy, sang every evening at the same hour, somewhere above me. For a long time I could not catch the words. But after hearing them day in, day out, I finally managed to catch a few. Strange words for a little girl, or a little boy. Was it a song in my head or did it come merely from without? It was a sort of lullaby, I believe. It often put me to sleep, even me. Sometimes it was a little girl who came. She had long red hair which hung down in braids. I didn't know who she was. She lingered awhile in the room, then went away without a word. Once I received the visit of a policeman. He said I was a suspicious character. I let him talk. He didn't dare arrest me. Or perhaps he had a kind heart. A priest also came to see me. I informed him I belonged to a branch of the reformed church. He asked what kind of parson I would like to see. He meant well. He told me to let him know if ever I needed help. He gave me his name and explained where I could reach him.

One day the woman made me a proposition. She said she needed money urgently, and if I could pay her six months in advance she would reduce my rent by a fourth during that period. Then we would revert to the original arrangement. This had the advantage of saving six weeks' rent, and the disadvantage of almost exhausting my capital. But could you call that a disadvantage? Wouldn't I stay on, in any case, till my last penny was gone, and even longer, till she put me out? I gave her the money and she gave me a receipt.

One morning not long after this event I was awakened by a man shaking my shoulder. It could not have been later than eleven. This man requested me to get up and leave his house immediately. He was most correct, I must say. His surprise, he said, was as great as mine. The house belonged to him. The woman had left the day before. The other lodgers had also left. But I saw her last evening, I said. You must be mistaken, he said, for she brought the keys to my office no later than yesterday afternoon. How could I have made such a mistake? But only the other day I paid her six months' rent in advance, I said. Get a refund, he said. But I don't even know her name, I said, not to mention her address. Here's the name and address she gave me, he said. I'm sick, I said, I can't leave like this, without any notice. He offered to send for a taxi, or an ambulance. He needed the room immediately, he said, for his pig which even then was catching cold in a cart before the door. I asked if he couldn't let me have another place, any old corner where I could lie down long enough to recover from my emotion and decide what to do. He replied he could not. Don't think I'm being unkind, he said. I could live here with the pig, I said. I would look after him. The long months of peace, wiped out in an instant! Come, come now, he said, get a grip on yourself. Be a man, get up, I've had enough. After all it was no concern of his. He had really been most patient. He must have visited the basement while I was asleep.

I felt weak, perhaps I was. The blinding light was painful. A bus took me into the country. I sat down in a field in the sun. But it seems to me that was much later. I stuck leaves under my hat, all the way round, to make a shade. The night was cold. I wandered for hours in the fields. At last I found a heap of manure. The next day I started back to the city. They made me get off three buses. I sat down beside the roadside and dried my clothes. I enjoyed doing that. I said to myself, There's nothing more to be done now till they are dry. When they were dry I brushed them with a brush, I think it was a kind of curry-comb, that I found in a stable. Then I went to the house and begged a glass of milk and a slice of bread and butter. They gave me everything except the butter. May I lie down in the stable? I said. No, they said. I returned to the city in a bus. I was still stinking, but with a stink that seemed to me rather pleasant. I much preferred it to my own, which, as a matter of fact, it prevented me from smelling, except a waft now and then. In the days that followed I took the necessary steps to recover my money. I don't know exactly what happened, whether I couldn't find the address, or whether there was no such address, or whether the woman was unknown there. I ransacked my pockets for the receipt, to try and decipher the name. It wasn't there. I couldn't remember when I had last seen it. She had doubtless taken it back while I was asleep. I don't know how long I wandered round thus, resting now in one place, now in another, in the city and in the country, buying my food whenever I could not steal it or beg it. The town had suffered many changes. Nor was the country as I remembered it. The general effect was the same. One day I caught sight of my son. A satchel under his arm, he was hastening along. He took off his hat and bowed and I saw he was completely bald. I was almost certain it was he. I turned round to gaze after him. He was bustling along on his duck feet, bowing and scraping and flourishing his hat to left and right. The insufferable son of a bitch.

There was a mirror in the street before which I used to stop to see my face. My beard looked mangy. There were places where it didn't grow at all. Even where it was thick there were holes, like clearings. The bitter little mouth looked like an anus. I puckered it, and the misted glass sent back the echo of my foul breath. I took off my hat to see my skull, stooping and rolling my eyes. It is difficult to get a good view of one's skull in a mirror. The best way is to drop your head, then bring it smartly up again. The whole skull is there in the mirror for a second, then the face covers it again. My skull was no worse. The sores were still running, at the scabs' good pleasure, but they were not infected, in my opinion. It was better for the poison to get out of the system. It ran into my hat, which I washed every evening under the pump, or in a stream, or in a well. I was tormented with crablice at this period. I must have picked them up in some nasty public lavatory.

One day I met a man I had known in former times. He lived in a cave by the sea. He had an ass that grazed, winter and summer, along the cliffs, or along the little tracks leading down to the sea. When the weather was very bad this ass came down to the cave of its own free will and sheltered there till the storm was past. So they had spent many a night together, huddled together, among the rocks, while the wind howled and the sea pounded on the shore. With the help of this ass he delivered sand, seawrack and shells to the townsfolk, for their gardens. He couldn't carry much at a time, for the ass was not strong and the city was far. But in this way he earned a little money, enough to keep him in tobacco and matches, and from time to time to buy a piece of bread. It was during one of these excursions that he met me, in the suburbs. He was delighted to see me, poor man. He begged me to go home with him and spend the night. Stay as long as you like, he said. What's wrong with your ass? I said. Don't mind him, he said. I reminded him that I wasn't in the habit of staying more than two or three minutes with anyone, and that the sea did not agree with me. He seemed deeply grieved to hear it. So you won't come, he said. But to my amazement I got up on the ass and off we went, in the shade of the red chestnuts rising from the sidewalk. I held the ass by the mane, one hand in front of the other. The little boys jeered, and threw stones, but their aim was poor, for they only hit me once, in the hat, which the old man caught as it fell. A policeman stopped us and accused us of disturbing the peace. My guide replied we were as nature had made us, the boys too were as nature had made them. It was inevitable, under these conditions, for the peace to be disturbed from time to time. Let us continue on our way, he said, and order will soon be restored on your beat. Thus we came at last to the quiet inland roads, white with dust, their hawthorn hedges and footpaths bordered with wild grass and daisies. We stopped once, towards nightfall, to let the ass drink and to buy a piece of bread. The ass carried me right down to the mouth of the cave, for in the dark I could not have followed the path winding down to the sea. Then he left us for his pasture.

I don't know how long I stayed there. The cave was nicely arranged, I must say. I treated my crablice with salt water and seaweed, but a lot of nits must have survived. I also put compresses of hot seaweed on my skull, which gave me temporary relief. It was here I found the file in my pocket. It was not broken, because the glass was not real glass. I thought Mr. Weir had confiscated all my belongings. I lay in the cave, and sometimes looked out at the horizon. I saw a vast rambling expanse, without islands and promontories. And yet at night a light shone into the cave, at regular intervals. My host was out most of the time. He fed me on fish. It is so easy for an active man to live in a cave, far from everybody. He invited me to stay as long as I liked. If I preferred to be alone, he would gladly prepare another cave for me further on. He would bring me food from day to day, and from time to time drop in to make sure I was all right and needed nothing. He was most friendly and hospitable. You wouldn't happen to know of a lake dwelling? I said. I couldn't stand the sea, its splashing, heaving tides and general convulsiveness. It's worse than the wind, which sometimes stops. The sea made the joints of my hands and feet feel as though they were full of ants. It kept me from sleeping for hours on end. If I stayed here something awful would happen to me, I said, and a lot of good that would do me. You would get drowned, he said. Yes, I said, or I'd jump off the cliff. And to think I couldn't live anywhere else, he said, in my cabin in the mountains I was very unhappy. Your cabin in the mountains? I said. He repeated the story of his cabin in the mountains, which I had forgotten. Even then it was as though I were hearing it for the first time. I asked him if he still had his cabin in the mountains. He replied he had not seen it since the day he had fled it, but that he believed it was still there, a little dilapidated no doubt. But when he urged me to take the key I refused, saying I had made other arrangements. You will always find me here, he said, if ever you need me. He gave me a penknife.

What he called his cabin was a wooden shed. The door had been removed, doubtless for firewood, or for some other purpose. The glass had disappeared from the window. The roof had fallen in at several places. The interior was divided, by what remained of a partition, into two unequal parts. The furniture had been removed. The vilest acts had been committed on the ground and against the walls. The floor was strewn with excrements, both human and animal, and with more or less fermented contraceptives. In a fairly fresh cowpad a heart had been traced, pierced by an arrow. Cakes of old vomit lay about the floor. And yet there was nothing to attract tourists. I also noticed the remains of abandoned bouquets. They had been greedily gathered, carried perhaps for miles, then thrown away, because they were cumbersome, or already withered. This was the dwelling to which I had been offered the key.

The scene was the familiar one of grandeur and desolation. Nevertheless, it was a roof over my head. I reposed on a bed of ferns, gathered at great labour with my own hands. One day I was so weak I could not get up, and I would certainly have lost consciousness but for the cow. Goaded by the icy mist, she came looking for a sheltered place to ruminate and drop her pads in comfort. She had not seen me. I tried to suck her, but lacked the strength. Besides, her udder was covered with dung. But taking off my hat, I managed in the end to squeeze into it a few drops of the precious liquid. If I had known a cow was to come, it's well in advance I would have wiped my hat. Half of it fell to the ground and was lost. But I said to myself, that has no importance, it's for nothing. She dragged me across the floor, stopping only to kick at me. She must have recently been milked. Clutching onto the dug with one hand, I kept my hat under it with the other. But in the end she prevailed, for she dragged me across the threshold and on into the giant streaming ferns, which would have overturned my hat if I had not let go.

As I drank the milk I reproached myself for what I had done. I could no longer count on that cow, and she would certainly warn the others.

More master of myself, I could have made a friend of her, caressing her and giving her good things to eat. She would have come every day, perhaps accompanied by other cows, to be fondled and made much of. Who knows, I might perhaps have learnt to make butter and cream and cheese, become fat and healthy and happy, free, gratis and for nothing, and perhaps even capable of rising to an honourable position in the world without obligation to anyone. But little by little I said to myself, No, all is for the best.

Once on the road I had only to go down hill. Soon carts began to overtake me, but none would take me up. In other clothes, with another face, they might have taken me up. My appearance, I must say, had greatly altered since my expulsion from the basement. The face notably seemed to have reached its climacteric. The humble, ingenuous smile would no longer come, nor the expression of candid misery containing stars and the distaff. I called them, but they would not come. A mask of old, dirty hairy leather, with holes and a slit, it was too far gone for the old turn of please your honour and God reward you and pity upon me. It was inconvenient. What would I crawl with in the future? I lay down on the edge of the road and began to writhe each time I heard a cart approaching. That was so they would not think I was sleeping or resting. I tried to groan, Help! Help! but the tone that came out was that of everyday conversation. I could no longer groan. Strictly speaking, my hour was not yet come, and yet the power to groan had deserted me. The last time I had had occasion to groan, not so long before, I had done so, as well as ever, and that in the absence of any heart to melt. To be thus abandoned, as it were, from one day to the next. Charming outlook! Yet, I said, the night is still young. Somewhat reassured, I lay down across the road, at a narrow place, so that the carts could not pass without passing over my body, with one wheel at least, or with two if there were four. But when the carts approached, I threw myself to one side, vanquished by fear, fear of pain. The town planner with the red beard, they removed his gall bladder, a gross mistake, and three or four days later he died, at the height of his faculties. But the day came when, looking round me, I was in the suburbs, and it was not far from there to the old haunts, beyond the stupid hope of rest or less pain. But it seems to me that was long after.

So I covered the lower part of my face with a black rag and went and begged at a sunny corner. For it seemed to me my eyes were not yet completely spent, thanks perhaps to the dark glasses my tutor had given me when I was small. He had also given me, on the same occasion, the *Ethics* of Geulincx, I don't know why. They were a man's glasses already, with a gold frame, for he was farsighted. They found him dead one fine morning, crumpled up in the water closet, his clothes in awful disorder, struck down by an infarctus. The *Ethics* had his name (Ward) on the front page, and the glasses had perhaps belonged to him too. The bridge, at the time I am speaking of here, was of brass wire, of the kind used to hang pictures and big mirrors, and two long black ribbons served as wings.

I wound them round my ears and then down under my chin where I tied them together. The lens had lost their opacity, doubtless from rubbing so long in my pocket against each other, and against the other objects there. But I had no further need of these glasses and used them merely to soften the glare of the sun. If I speak of them, it is for the sole reason of explaining why my sight lagged behind my other senses. As for the black rag, for a long time I searched for it in vain. I ended up by cutting a piece from the lining of my greatcoat. No, I had no greatcoat now, from my coat then. That gave me a gray rag, rather, but I had to put up with it. Till afternoon I held my face raised towards the southern sky, then towards the western till it was night. The bowl gave me a lot of trouble. I couldn't use my hat because of my skull. I was afraid kind ladies and gentlemen would be repulsed at the sight of my skull, rather than moved to pity. As for holding out my hat, that was quite out of the question. So I got a tin and hung it from a button of my greatcoat, on a level with the pubis. It did not hang straight, it leaned respectfully towards the passerby, he only had to drop his mite. However that obliged him to come close up to me, he even risked touching me. So I got a bigger tin and placed it on the sidewalk not far from my feet. But people who give alms don't much care to toss them, there's something contemptuous about this gesture which is repugnant to sensitive natures. To say nothing of their having to aim. They are willing enough to give, but not for their gift to go rolling under the passing feet or under the passing wheels, to be picked up perhaps by some undeserving person. So they don't give. There are those, to be sure, who stoop, but generally speaking, people who give alms much prefer to do so without having to stoop. What they prefer above all is to espy the wretch from afar, get ready their penny, drop it in their stride, with an innocent air, and hear the God bless you dying in the distance. Personally, I never said that, nor anything like it, but I did make a noise with my mouth. So I got a kind of board, and tied it to my neck and waist. It jutted out just at the right height, pocket height, and its edge was far enough from my person for the mite to be bestowed without fear of contagion. Some days I strewed it with flowers, leaves, petals, buds, and that herb men call fleabane, I believe, in a word, whatever I could find. I didn't seek them out, but all the pretty things of this description that I came across were for the board. They must have thought I loved Nature. Most of the time I looked up at the sky, but without focussing it. Most of the time it was a mixture of white, blue and grey, and then the evenings, other colours that evening lends. I felt it weighing softly on my face, and rubbed my face against it time and again, first the one cheek then the other. To rest my neck I dropped my head on my chest from time to time. Then I could see the board in the distance, a haze of many colours. I leaned against the wall, but without nonchalance, I shifted my weight from one foot to the other, and my hands clutched the lapels of my greatcoat. To beg with your hands in your pockets makes a bad impression, it irritates the workers, especially in winter. I never left more than two or three pennies on the board. There were urchins who, under cover of giving me a coin, swept away all I had. It was to buy themselves sweets. I unbuttoned my trousers to scratch myself. I scratched in an upward direction, with four nails. I pulled on the hairs, to get relief. It passed the time, time flew when I scratched myself. Real scratching is superior to masturbation, in my opinion. One can masturbate up to the age of forty, and even beyond, but in the end it becomes a simple habit. And then one cannot masturbate from morning till night. Whereas I, to scratch myself properly, could have done with a dozen hands. I itched all over, on the privates, in the bush up to the navel, under the arms, in the arse, and then patches of eczema and psoriasis that I could set raging merely by thinking of them. It was in the arse I had most pleasure. It was an authentic pruritus, unless it was worms. I stuck in my forefinger up to the knuckle. Later, if I had to shit, the pain was appalling. But I hardly shat any more, at this period, once or twice a week at the very most. Now and then an airplane flew by, sluggishly, it seemed to me. Often, at the end of the day, I discovered the leg of my trousers all wet. That must have been the dogs. I personally pissed very little. If by chance the need came on me, a little squirt in my fly was enough to relieve it. I had a magnificent sphincter. Once at my post, I did not leave it till nightfall. I had a wretched appetite at this period, I never lunched. After work I brought a bottle of milk and drank it in the evening in the shed. Better still, I got a little boy to buy it for me, always the same one, and I gave him a penny for his pains. For they would not have served me. One day I was present at a strange scene. Normally I did not see much. I did not hear much either. But on this particular day the intrusion was too marked. For some time I had thought I heard an unwonted sound. I did not investigate the cause, for I said to myself, It's going to stop. But as it did not stop I had no choice but to find out the cause, and so be rid of it. Its cause was a man perched on the roof of a car, haranguing the passers-by, of whom many stopped, the better to see and hear. That at least was the way I looked at it. He was bellowing so loud that snatches of his oration reached my ears: injustice... union... brothers... Marx... capital... bread... love... right to live. It was all Greek to me. The car was drawn up against the curb, just in front of me, and I saw the orator from behind. All of a sudden he turned round towards me, as to a specimen. Look at this down and out, he vociferated, this leftover. If he doesn't go down on four paws, it's for fear of being impounded. Old, lousy, rotten, in the garbage heap. And there are a thousand like him, worse than him, ten thousand, twenty thousand. A voice, Thirty thousand. In your plutocratic Sodom, resumed the orator, every day of your life you pass them by, and when you have won at the races you fling them a farthing. Do you ever think? The voice, No. No indeed, resumed the orator, you find that normal, the way of the world. A penny, tuppence. The voice, Thruppence. It never enters your head, resumed the orator, that your charity is a crime, that you are subscribing to enslavement, stultification and organized murder. Take a good look at this living corpse.

You may tell me it's his own fault. Ask him if it's his own fault. The voice, After you. Then he bent down towards me and flung me a phrase I did not understand. I had perfected my board. It now consisted of two boards hinged together, which enabled me, when my work was done, to fold it and carry it under my arm. So I took off the rag, as I always did when my work was done, pocketed the few coins remaining on the board, untied the board, folded it and put it under my arm. Do you hear me, you crucified bastard! the orator cried. Then I went away, although it was still light. But generally speaking it was a quiet corner, frequented but not overcrowded, prosperous and respectable. He must have been a religious fanatic. I could find no other explanation. Perhaps he was an escaped lunatic. He had a nice face, a little on the red side perhaps.

I did not work every day. I had practically no expenses. I even managed to put a little aside, for my last days. On days I did not work, I remained lying in the shed. The shed was on a private estate, on the bank of the river. This estate, whose main entrance opened on a dark, narrow and silent street, was surrounded by a wall, except of course, along the river, which marked its northern boundary for a distance of about thirty yards. Across the water, on the other bank, it was still the quayside, and behind a confusion of low houses, wasteland, hoardings, chimneys, steeples and towers. A kind of parade ground was also to be seen, where soldiers played football all year round. The estate seemed abandoned. The gates were shut. The paths were overgrown with grass. Only the ground floor windows had shutters. The others were sometimes lit at night, faintly, now one, now another. At least that was my impression. It might have been reflections. I scaled the wall and went down through the trees and bushes to the shed. I never strayed from this path. I never went near the house nor walked in the garden. I went from the street to the shed, from the shed to the street, by the shortest way, under cover of the vegetation. In the shed there was a boat upside down. I righted it, chocked it up with stones and pieces of wood, took out the seats and made my bed inside. The rats had difficulty in getting at me, because of the bulge of the hull. And yet they longed to. Just think of it, living flesh, for in spite of everything, I was still living flesh. I had lived too long among rats, in my random dwellings, to share the vulgar dread of them. I even had a soft place in my heart for them. They came with such confidence towards me, it seemed without the least repugnance. They made their toilet with catlike gestures. Toads, at evening, motionless for hours, caught flies with their tongues. They liked to post themselves where cover ends and open air begins, they have a predilection for thresholds. But I had to contend now with water rats, exceptionally lean and thus exceptionally ferocious. So I made a kind of lid with stray boards. It's incredible the number of boards I've come across in my lifetime, I never needed a board but there it was. I had only to stoop and pick it up. I liked doing the handy man. It completely covered the boat. I pushed it a little towards the stern, climbed into the boat by the bow, crawled to the stern, raised my feet and pushed the lid back towards the bow till it covered me completely. But what did my feet push against? They pushed against a cross bar I had nailed to the lid, for that purpose. I liked doing the handy man. But it was better to climb into the boat by the stern and to pull back the lid with my hands till it completely covered me, and push it forward in the same way when I wanted to get out. As grips for my hands I planted two spikes just in the right place. These little odds and ends of carpentry, if I may call it thus, carried out with such tools and material as I chanced to find, gave me a certain pleasure. I was comfortable enough in the boat, I must say. My lid fitted so well I had to pierce a hole to facilitate combustion. It was no good closing your eyes, you must leave them open in the dark. Such at least is my opinion. I am not speaking of sleep, I am speaking of what I believe is called waking. Besides, I slept very little at this period, I was never sleepy, believe it or not. Flat then on my back, I saw nothing, except, vaguely, just above my head, through the tiny cracks, the gray light of the shed. It was just what I needed, neither too much nor too little. To see nothing at all is panic. I heard dimly the cries of the gulls flocking nearby, about the mouth of the sewer hard by. In a spew of yellow foam, if my memory serves me right, the filth gushed into the river, and above the slush of birds screaming with hunger and fury, apparently. I heard the lapping of water against the slips, if that is the right name for it, and against the bank, and I heard it too from my makeshift coffin, the other noise, so different, of open wave. I too, when I moved, felt less boat than wave, and my stillness was the stillness of pools. That very rightly made no sense. The rain too, for it often rained in their country. Sometimes a drop, falling through the roof of the shed, exploded on my refuge. The general effect was very liquid. And then of course there was the voice of the wind too, or rather those so various, it's playthings. But what does it amount to? Soughing, howling, groaning, sighing. What I would have liked was hammer strokes, bang bang bang clanging in the desert. I let farts, to be sure, but hardly ever a real crack, they oozed out with a sucking noise, melted in the mighty never. I don't know how long I stayed there. I was really very snug in my box, I must say. It seemed to me I had grown more independent in my recent years. That no one came any more, that no one could come any more to ask me if I was all right and needed nothing, distressed me then but little. I was all right, such at least was my impression, and the fear of getting worse was less with me. As for my needs, they had dwindled as it were to my dimensions, and become, if I may say so, of so exquisite a quality as to exclude all thought of succour. To know I had a being, however faint and false, outside of me, had once the power to stir my heart. You become unsociable, it's inevitable. Enough to make you wonder sometimes if you are on the right planet. Even the words desert you, you are stuck there like an idiot, mindless. Perhaps it's the moment when the vessels stop communicating, you know, the vessels. You are there between two murmurs, it's probably still the same old song, but you wouldn't think so. There were times when I longed to push away the lid and get out of the boat, and could not, I was so indolent and weak, so content deep down where I was. I felt them hard upon me, the icy, tumultuous streets, the terrifying faces, the noises that slash, pierce, claw, bruise. So I waited till the desire to shit, or even to piss lent me strength. I did not want to dirty my nest. And yet that sometimes happened, and even more and more often. Arched and rigid, I edged down my trousers, turned a little on my side, just enough to free the hole. That saddened me. To contrive a little kingdom in the midst of the universal muck, then shit on it, ah the pity of it. The excrements were me too, I know, I know, but all the same. It is true I made things right at the first opportunity, I removed them with a little shovel and threw them into the river. Then I washed the spot, scraped it with my penknife and rubbed it with grass. One day, as I was doing this, I conceived the idea of making myself a litter, like what you see in stables. So I gathered some grass and reeds and set them to dry. I didn't need a great deal, a little armful did me a fortnight, with a little restraint and care. I was a long time finding this solution, but I did find it in the end. This matter disposed of, I began to have visions, I who never had them, except sometimes in my sleep. Strictly speaking, I don't think I ever had any. When I was tiny perhaps. For me, when the beauties of the visible world desisted, for some reason or other, all became sound. Even when I masturbated it was with sounds I urged myself on, and notably with terms of endearment. As a last resort, when I was in difficulty, I made the inexistent bedstead groan. That seldom failed. Is that what is called an auditive type? That's a question that calls for a lot of balls, but time is running out. I knew they were visions, for it was night and I was in the boat. What else could they have been? So I was in the boat and gliding on the waters. I didn't have to row, the ebb was carrying me out. Anyway, I saw no oars, they must have been taken away. I had a board, the remains of a seat perhaps, which I used when I came too close to the bank, or when I saw a bridge pile loom before me or a barge at its moorings. There were stars in the sky, but not too many. I didn't know what the weather was like. I was neither cold nor warm, and all seemed calm. The banks receded more and more, it was inevitable, soon I could see them no more. The lights grew fainter and fewer as the river widened. There on the banks men were sleeping, bodies were gathering strength for the toil and joys of the morrow. The boat was not gliding now, it was tossing, buffeted by the choppy water of the bay. All seemed calm, and yet foam was washing aboard. Now the open air was all around me, I had no other shelter than the land, and what is that, the shelter of the land, at such a time. I saw the beacons, four in all, including a lightship. I knew them well, even as a child I had known them well. It was evening, I was with my father on a height, he was holding my hand. I would have liked him to draw me close with a gesture of protective love, but his mind was on other things. He also taught me the names of the mountains. But, to have done with these visions, I also saw the lights of the buoys, the sea seemed full of them, red and green and even yellow, to my surprise. And on the slopes of the mountain, now rearing its unbroken bulk behind the town, the fires turned from gold to red, from red to gold. I knew what it was, it was the gorse burning. How often I had set it on fire myself with a match, as a child. And hours later, back in my home, before I got into bed, I watched from my high window, the fire I had lit. That night then, aglow with distant fires, on sea and on land and in the sky, I drifted with the currents and the tides. I noticed that my hat was tied, with a string I suppose, to my buttonhole. I got up from my seat in the stern, and a great clanking was heard. That was the chain. One end was fastened to the bow, and the other fastened round my waist. I must have pierced a hole beforehand in the bottom of the boat and corked it up, with an ordinary cork, I suppose, for there I was on my knees prying it out with my penknife. The hole was small and the water rose slowly. It would take me a good half hour to sink, barring accidents. Back now in my seat at the stern, my legs stretched out, my back well propped against the sack stuffed with grass I used as a cushion, I swallowed my sedative. The sea, the sky, the mountains, the islands closed in and crushed me in a mighty systole, then scattered to the uttermost limits of space, or so it seemed to me. The memory came faint and cold of the story I wanted to tell, a story in the image of my life, I mean without the courage to end nor the strength to go on.

(translated from the French by **Richard Seaver**
in collaboration with the author)

elpinore's overland putsch

judson crews

Driven against gain we poked out
their eyes preserving their genitals intact
these pigmy devils

This is not a theme of love but of the sea
chaos a part of my design
courting the leaver old past marne

Maimed them beyond all keep-sakes
the season frigid the forest riven
of all king reign
            their blow-guns and their arrows

The mighty Amazons, for we knew
the season of rain
                    the lumbering birds
we sought the Dodo's breast

Beast doth humour spoil domain
we were driven those days and nights
but driven against all gain.

as rare as mortal

robert horan

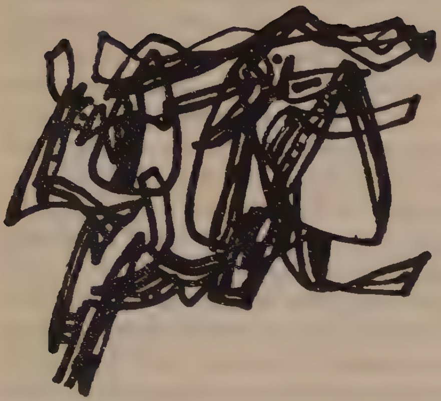
Some few and wise work in the world's real weather,
the actual marbles of the veinèd year,
which, though it flows no grapes and snows together,
lays in its goldest wheat its greyest tare.

Some few rest at April's violet limit,
to assume a later if a coarser splendor.
Among the lilies and leopards at the summit
of August, they surrender the summer.
Again at autumn, ghosted with leaf and apple,
like the twilight mirror holding to its guest,
give up at last in the splinters of stubble
and the archaic filigrees of frost.

Some few and wise, among their looms and roots,
allow the winter its bleak anagrams.
The ice exacts its palace in the fruits
the bulbs draw down their spare and secret flames.

These few who remember but surrender all,
the rose to the holly and the swan to snow,
anticipate all solstice in the waterfall
imagine perfection's fountain, then let it go.
These are as rare as mortal, few as free,
who have time's kingdoms for their monarchy.

the rum and the pelican



alexander trocchi

JAMES Fidler had a varicose constellation behind the knee of his left leg. That, and his feet, caused him some pain when he walked. For this reason he did not normally walk far, and since he was born and bred in a large city whose arteries were fed by a never-ending stream of often stationary tramcars this debility caused him little concern. When he contemplated the gradual decay of his various members, his dismay was a formless one, uncoloured by its object; it was in all respects the same dismay which took hold of him as in the morning papers he read of wars and rumours of wars. That things in general, his leg, his feet, the world into which he had been born, untimelily, were going from bad to worse he never doubted, often saying indeed, and perhaps twice in one week, to the postman, to the woman in the dairy, the one with the ulcer (or birthmark, he couldn't decide which), to a man in a bar, to a bar of men, *It's always the same, things are going from bad to worse,* or alternatively, *Times are changing,* or, more simply if more ambiguously, *I know.*

As he grew, so did the world, older, whatever that implied, and at night as he stepped into his pyjamas, looking, his legs trailing haired and whitely, down, then sat on the edge of the bed, the flat tyre of his belly convex in the droop of his spine, to rub one yellow-soled foot and then the other and examine precisely and individually the toes, he was aware of the carpet, thin now, of the bedspread, of the door, and of the hall and the street after that, and he was aware of no transition; for the sound of the late tramcar was there with his foot and the voice of the morning with the hair of his belly straightening, saying, *Raining again, eh?* as though *he* too required confirmation of a fact, indubitably there, as all theres are there, but coming after four days of rain which like most things was... excessive. And the tiredness then in his limbs, turning, with a vague lumbar pain and heart beating, all theres there, the out light, the bed under, and that, touching, still, tentative always, colder than the rest of the body—a medical reason—not, not that he couldn't have, remembering the rain had not in fact rained that morning, perhaps touched notwithstanding the other people in the bar her under-table part, the clue to whose sex was discretion, and talking galahadly, perched out at his voice, until she, there-ing him as he had her, was morely there, an unguent to the fatigue of his body, rinsing his drains. To experience that was to feel younger, back to the days when without embarrassment on a beach or in the public baths he could remove in a cubicle and with an agreeable sense of peeling himself his trousers, was moreover to desire again the experience, place-time confederate, of cohabitation, for a night or a week's holiday of nights, born in the *Palais de Danse*, lived along the fairy-lighted dusk of the resort's promenade, deceased on the one dim flight of carpeted stairs between their rooms. The first time, minutely conscious of time, was always, with the skirt loose only and in partial collusion—until the elastic at his fingers was wet, quite wet—the best time, most gradual, moving on the gradient of his will athwart hers, brave against lack, obvious but for his scepticism, and hers, of resistance. To experience that, even in imagination, the sight, the feel, the smell—he considered them initially in isolation and then more voluptuously in a cognate form—was, touching, to become for the future anyway resolved. And yet resolution was foreign to him, such decisions as he made being, as he had noticed on more than one occasion—tilted backwards on a dentist's chair in the shadow of the appalling crane, standing in the palmstrewn foyer of a cinema with a ticket between his forefinger and thumb—somehow already there, as the present resolution was already if ambiguously there when Miss Lanelly stooped to pick up from between splayed legs the dropped pencil. *Oh, Mr. Fidler!* The voice—derisively singsong, the squarish teeth arranging words under her big lips and the work of all present momentarily at hangfire until she had repeated her absurd request for a 2 1/2 d. stamp—no longer signified, was even pleasant if one considered not the words but the lips and the peculiar damp breathlessness with which the words were articulated. *Oh, Mr. Fidler!*

Undoubtedly, in ebb, in flow, in procession and recession, in inoculation and pollution, his life was fortuitous: go out, go in, a bus, a shop, opening and closing his umbrella, his yellow face close to the yellow face of the barometer, somewhat of a meteorologist, *Cirrus, cumulus, stratus,* he said and added, *Cirro-cumulus, strato-cumulus,* before, lowering his eyes to the level of the streets, he turned, caught a glimpse of a wasp-waisted red-buttocked nearly-woman with the tremor of jelly in her kilted tightness, and thought himself to be something of a morphologist. He might, he supposed, have been a painter. But as for decision, that was something else.

It might have been a cold morning in the earlier part of January and his breath sprouted longly and whitely from his nostrils. His nose nipped, and his toes, vegetable almost from forty shodden years, were cold, a band of pain at his extremities. Inside his gloved hand he held his nose, not for thought although he hoped to give that impression, but for heat. He was scarved against the wind to the tips of his ears and his gaze, recessed under his bowlerbrim like a caved animal, moved bleakly outwards over his tilted hand towards the frost-blackened hedges. It occurred to him that the situation was not new or that if in particular it was—he had cut himself that morning in shaving and his skin was minutely painful where his scarf chafed—it was at least familiar. Of that he was certain. And there for the moment, overtaken by a vague sense of the familiar, his mind ceased to function. And that too was no novelty. His thought processes were frequently stricken in this way, atrophied indeed before he could properly have been said to have thought anything at all, this or that line or (more exactly) point of speculation simply did not happen, or, if it did, happened in a most exasperating way, collapsing abruptly a moment later, its object, often anyway merely verbal, puttering surely and suddenly downwards like a cake of soap in a deep bath. After a few feeble attempts to retrieve it Fidler consistently gave up. At this point and on this particular morning it was the bus stop to his left and the frost-daggered hedges at the other side of the street which gently in the ensuing vacuum were there. And when it occurred to him that the hedges, similarly black and similarly frosted, had previously been there, he was almost and effortlessly in repossession of the train of thought which had eluded him. But then in a familiarly defensive manner he coughed and was distracted by the sound of the approaching bus.

He boarded the bus and climbed upstairs. He could not remember ever having sat downstairs, except when his mother accompanied him, and sometimes not even then, his desire to smoke—prohibited on the lower deck by a penalty of five pounds—furnishing him with a good enough reason to desert her temporarily and to escape the heightened ordeal of fifteen public and immobile minutes in her company. But in the morning on his way to the office he seldom smoked a cigarette and thus his habitual ascent was difficult to explain. Often as he clumped up the metal stairs, his umbrella clasped firmly in a perpendicular position in front of him and his shoulders hunched under his rough grey overcoat to avoid denting his hat on various metal protruberances, the purposelessness of that ascent occurred to him, the more so because it caused his bad leg to ache, and he would be critical of himself. But before he reached the top deck he was conscious of the familiar cognitive shrinkage, of the familiar sclerosis in his mental processes, and as soon as his eyes were level with the top deck he found himself more or less exclusively occupied in finding if possible a window seat.

The purpose of a window seat was two-fold. In the first place, irrespective of the width of a man on sitting down—broader no doubt than in standing up—there was never room for two on one seat, and thus, while the man at the window was often constricted, he was never overbalanced, and he was not prey to the vigorous passage movements of others fighting to get off or on. Secondly, to sit on one buttock, without either newspaper or window to distract one from one's predicament, was more than Fidler's dignity would allow. And each morning he was compelled to board the bus without a newspaper. This came about because since the war the local newsagent had discontinued the practice of delivering the morning paper. The shop was a pre-war wooden structure of temporary intention situated more than three hundred yards away from Fidler's house. To walk there so early in the morning, to pass from one dismal bungalowed street into another and into another beyond that, was depressing, so depressing that four years ago he had ceased to do it. Thus he had no newspaper. He might have taken a book instead, but while the journey was too long to be without a newspaper it was too short to get into a book. Each morning therefore, bookless and without a newspaper, he travelled on the bus to work, and the journey even in a window seat would have been unbearable had it not been for a particular landmark mercifully there about halfway towards the office along the bus route. As it was, except on those luckless mornings when, no window seat—left-hand window seat—being available, he was perched precariously on the slipping fulcrum of one buttock, he passed the first half of the journey in pleasing anticipation and the second half in somewhat indelicate speculation.

For the thighs of the negress were at least four feet long, turned and lustrous as gunmetal. Her yard-wide abdomen—Fidler contemplated it with a ringing in his ears—rose smoothly and massively from the red silk hangings at her curved loins which, thrusting forwards from the hips, were disclosed voluptuously. Above, twisting backwards in a supple line, the upper part of her torso spread nakedly except for the brassière into the sleekness of arms stretched out above her head to grasp or nearly grasp, for her body was all the more beautifully flexed if it evaded her, the rum bottle in the pelican's beak.

Fidler was able to discount the bird, and the bottle too, as he had always been able to discount, by some species of selective vision, the ulterior motive in the dentifrice smile.

Unhappily, the duration of his vision depended entirely upon the state of the traffic lights. As best, the bus would be brought to a halt at the red lights exactly opposite the huge billboards; at worst, his vision would be fragmentary or totally obstructed. This could come about in three separate ways, which Fidler, with his habitual precision, was pleased to call *acceleration*, *procession*, and *occlusion*. For the signals might be green and the locomotion speedy. Or the signals might be red but because of traffic unapproachable. Finally, too frequently, the bus on which Fidler travelled might at the critical moment slide relentlessly on to the blind side of a second double-decker, and that was occlusion. In these ways, and in their various permutations and combinations, Fidler was often deprived of the sight of that magnificent torso which from the moment he was installed in a left-hand window seat occupied his thoughts and caused in his solar plexus an anticipatory prickle like a minutely electrified wire. That that feeling, a kind of faint nausea at his roots, might at least in part have been caused by his hurriedly-eaten and ill-digested breakfast did not escape him, but the transformation of mere weight at his midriff into the heavy magnetic potential which lay not so much on his stomach as at his throat and thighs was not, he knew, caused either by porridge or by stewed tea. And as the double-decker lumbered on to where the poster was situated James Fidler polished the window with the sleeve of his overcoat.

From the moment almost at which he had obtained a seat, his favourite one, he had been pressed heavily and warmly against the window by a rather broad man who was reading a copy of the *Daily Express*. With his eye for figures and his small capacity for amazement, he noted that its daily circulation had increased to 3,986,401, held the nebulous figure for a moment in his mind's eye, and then, enjoying to the full the sense of fortification he derived from the pressing nearness of the man, he allowed his mind to become blank, jelloid, receptive.

Then the billboards came in sight. Out of the front window he could see them in the distance at the turn of the road. The signals were red. Now had arrived that nerve-wracking period during which he would have liked, if he could have driven a vehicle, to have piloted the bus himself. A careless approach could ruin everything. At the present speed, Fidler calculated, if no one got on or off at the last remaining stop between bus and lights, the signals would be nastily green by the time the bus drew opposite the poster, and the bus would career onwards like a blind rhinocerous past the dynamic negress, on, to the unexciting assortment of posters advertising *Hovis*, *Bovril*, and the razorblades of the moustachoid Gillette. Fidler was tense. His soul, in point of fact a morass of trepidation, was patient only in its upper layers for the bell which would order the bus to stop. He perceived on looking out of the front window that the amber caution signal was already there beside the red, and then, before he took his eyes away, the green light appeared. At that moment the bell rang and the bus, which had seemed about to lurch out towards the crossing to catch the green light, shuddered into a slow crawl and came to a halt beside the kerb at the request bus stop. An old lady descended and appeared before Fidler, glancing this way and that along the pavement. The bus moved slowly forwards, relented as the gears changed, and cruised at middling speed towards the changing lights. There was no procession of traffic in front of them and Fidler experienced a small flicker of triumph as the bus, seemingly guided by his own silent and powerful will, glided to a halt exactly opposite the lustrous immensity of the negress from Martinique. Without haste, he inclined slightly forwards and sideways and trained his eyes through the glass on his nose through the glass of the window to bring into existence the tilted breasts, more than eighteen inches in diameter (circumference eighteen inches times pi), their lower lobes peerless and dusky where they protruded from the miniature brassière. He breathed more deeply, relaxed in his seat, and allowed his eyes to move over her body, taking in the thighs, the navel, the arms, in their separate sinuosities. And then the lights had changed again and the bus was moving, and, having seen almost to excess, he was able to resist a backward glance. His eyes, unseeing, drew level with the beginning of tenements.

Gradually, the image faded, even from behind eyelids shut covetously behind his spectacles, until his consciousness, vacant of image, veered irresolutely towards thought. His first thought, a mere eidolon of what had passed so smoothly before, was that it was a pity; his second, that it was familiar; for images, however much he sought to preserve them, because they excited him or because they limited thought, were without exception subject to the same drastic dissolutions as his thought processes, to correlative drainages in clarity and definition, until, without reference to his will, the flesh—for James Fidler had a predilection for flesh which informed a disproportionate percentage of the fleeting images which came and went during his waking day—came first to resemble a tadpole's tail in transparency and then... nothing, for even that was gone. He lamented the fact that the process was beyond his control. His mental drains, indeed, he had on more than one occasion compared to a faulty lavatory cistern, he wist not when it sluiced. And so the fillings up and emptyings went on, thoughts displaced by images, images by thoughts, unpredictably, in aggravating, in bogus succession.

Had this experience been peculiar to the northern winter, when every breath of air attacked his organism with the paralytic effect of a preservative, to whose fogs, rains and sleets he attributed the murmur of his marrow-fats, he might have put it down to the cold. Indeed, if a thought pointed to tiresomely complex implications, he frequently employed such a procedure, saying to himself, *It is impossible to think clearly under such conditions*. But in general, particularly with images, that line of approach was impossible, because now it was June; in general, particularly with images, courted, courted, lusted after, it was impossible, because the sun was hot and a short while ago Miss Lanelly, straddled downwards to retrieve the pencil, should have left and did not leave an indelible impression which should have endured and did not endure long after dinner during which he fought to bring the amorphous white blob into focus that he might recognise it as female. That image, like its innumerable precursors, he had been unable to recreate. With that, Fidler thought, as with this, and in winter and in summer the second half of the journey was the antithesis of the first. His mind, formerly receptive, was strung by inner lesions. The magnetic load which yard by yard along the route had built itself up inside him began to dissipate from the moment at which the bus drew away from the traffic signals, and the world, hitherto excluded by the image of the negress, reasserted itself in all particulars, the greaseladen hat of the man in front, the amputated thumb of the man beside him, 3,986,401 copies of the *Daily Express*, and the memory of an hundred and one facts gleaned from a curious reading of geographical magazines.

Yes, it might have been winter but it was not, for it was summer, and what season can be both winter and summer and in the same hemisphere? And although for all the difference it made, it might have been that cold morning in the earlier part of January when his breath sprouted longly and whitely from his nostrils, when the toothless combs of his bony feet impelled his scarved body forward under his bowlerbrim into a new day which was old except in particular, it was not, for it was evening now and the rain was off and Miss Lanelly with a ladder in her stocking and wearing a bright yellow oilskin had shaken hands—for the first time—and was walking away with the knowledge of his knowledge of her knowledge that he desired her, walking away, the oiled garment a second and rippling epidermis, quickly, taking her decision beyond traffic out of reach.

Background again. Like the war. Soon be over, Fidler remembered thinking. But business, as Beakin had said, went on. Gasmasks, the blackout, compulsory firewatching. *Whatever you do, don't throw water over them*, the instructor said. *Lie on your belly, crawl forward and dowse them with sand. Sand. That's what you've got it for, four buckets on each landing. Remember, the main danger to the civilian populace is incendiaries. Fire. The answer is sand.* Fidler stepped to one side to avoid a puddle. He had stubbed his cigarettes on Tuesday and Thursday nights in four ridiculous buckets of sand, and one morning as he awoke to a hangman's noose of braces dangling at the level of his eyes—he had been very drunk the night before, having gone out to a bar in St Vincent Street for a nightcap to relieve the boredom of his long watch—he stretched forth his arm to remove from the bucket which served as an ashtray the four lipsticked butts.

One... two... three... four...
Lay them gently on the floor.

7.15 a.m. Following Beakin's injunction, he opened the office window to allow the inward sag of dank winter air. Sniff. *See the place is aired, James. We are at war but at least we can observe the elementary rules of hygiene.* He turned to dismantle the altar of love, folding its prongs within the canvas and shaking the fetid memory out of the blankets. He remembered then, at that moment and before he drew on his trousers, thinking it was fortunate that the nocturnal equipment of firewatchers did not run to sheets. To *Ross's* for two buttered rolls and a cup of tea.

The war was over. It ended falsely, with fairground music as he crossed Argyle Street to catch the bus home. It sank into a lost winter, a lost series of winters as he hesitated before the impudent onward rush of a mail van whose skirling wheels splashed his trouser legs. It (the war) and the vague image of sex on an army blanket was quite defunct as he rounded St Enoch's subway station in search of his transport. He joined the queue.

The journey back, like the journey to, was by way of the hoarding. But he climbed aboard without eagerness. For this there was an obvious explanation. The very possibilities were parched for they were but two. To follow his own nomenclature, they were *obliquity* and *rapidity*, the latter term being admittedly redundant since it was indistinguishable from *acceleration*. Vision was oblique when the lights were at red. The crossing was between, the femininity flat. Alternatively, and anyway successively, the bus ran through the lights and on the other side of the street the billboard sprang and diminished, a short-thrown stone, fragmented by traffic in its trajectory.

When he thought of Eileen Lanelly, he closed his eyes to isolate the thought which, in the damp and smoke-hung human atmosphere of the bus's upper box, burgeoned and fled to whiteness, fats, white slats of flesh, strung nervously. The close humidity of the bus contributed to the phase. At three fingers his hat-peak was gripped, wet upon his knees, and felt, ambiguously, as flesh would, wood might, if it were wet and sodden.

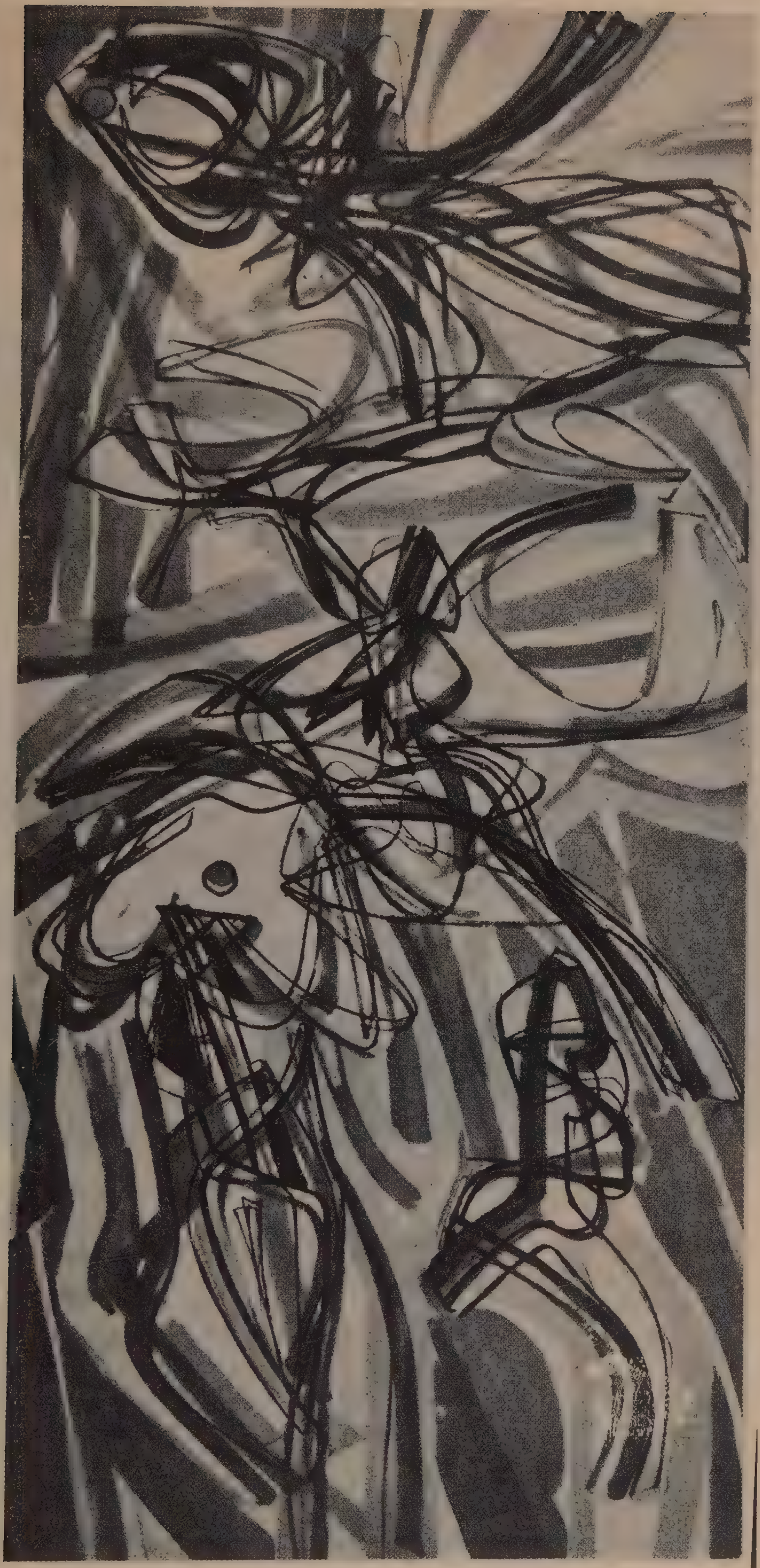
The bus arrived.

Stairs descended and road crossed, he put his key in the door, his coat on the rack, his hat on top. He sniffed and grimaced at the odour of fish.

stanley william hayter

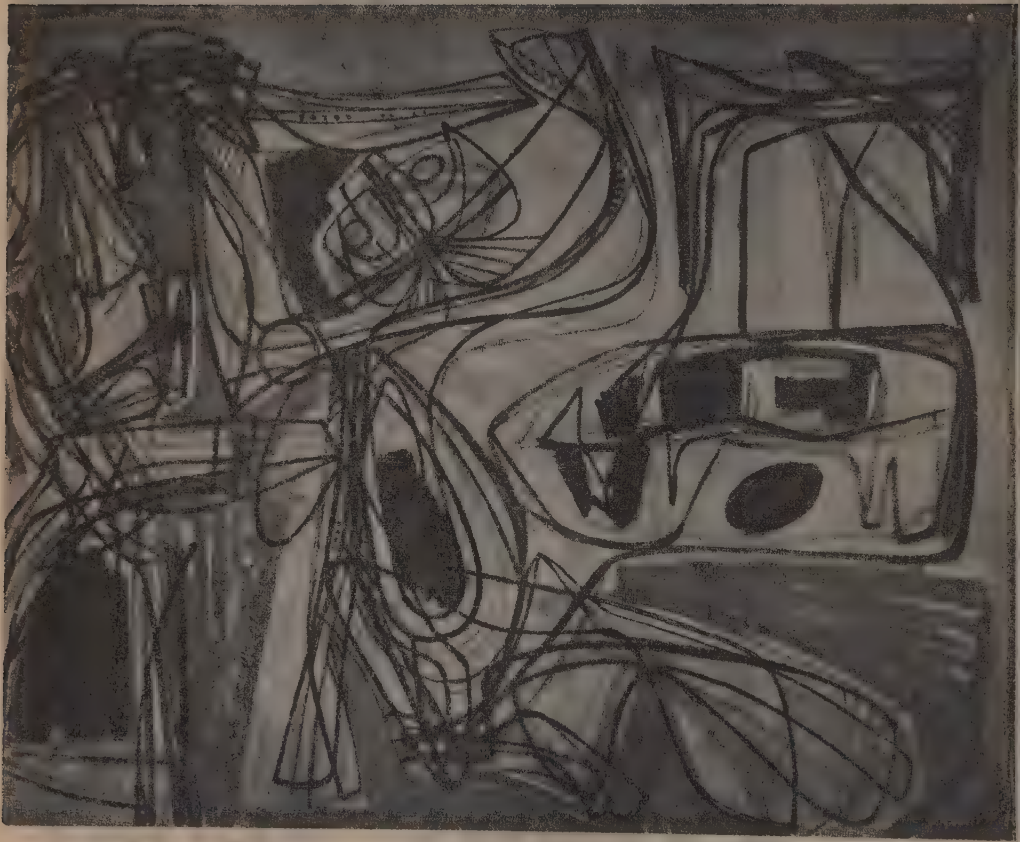
Stanley William Hayter was born in London in 1901. He stutied at Whitgift School and at the University of London. His precocious facility in the natural sciences earned him scholarships, and from 1922 to 1925 he worked as an oil chemist in Persia. In 1926 he founded his « Atelier 17 » in Paris, for the purpose of rehabilitating the art of engraving. Artists such as Picasso, Miro, Calder, Masson and Tanguy worked frequently though irregularly at his studio, and their presence gave « Atelier 17 » considerable prestige in later years.

During the 30's, Hayter was closely associated with the Paris Surrealists, but at the beginning of the Second World War, in 1940, he went to the United States. He started his career in the New World by teaching in San Francisco, but he soon moved East to found a second « Atelier 17 » in New York. There he gathered round him an impressive group of devoted students, whose interest was fired by the enthusiasm and undeniable mastery of their chief. At present, Hayter, although he has kept his studio in New York, has opened another in Paris, at 287 rue Vaugirard. It is there, as well as in his book, *New Processes of Engraving — A Practical Guide* (Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., London) that the essence of Hayter's revolutionary methods in the art of engraving can be found.



painting 1953

painting 1949



the theatre of eugene ionesco

daniel mauroc

M. Ionesco presents his plays as «anti-pièces»... We are already acquainted with numerous «anti-poèmes», «anti-romans», etc., whose pretensions and terrorism are justified, if at all, only in a negative way—in so far as there is an attempt to mask a basic conformism. The theatre of Ionesco is not of this genre; it is incumbent on any critic to emphasise the essentially dramatic character of his innovations. *The Lesson* and *The Bald Prima Donna* are «anti-pièces» only in the sense in which the ordinary run of plays are *not* theatre. In literature as in politics, the absolute revolutionary act consists in silence.

In the theatre of Ionesco—and it is well called «theatre»—we, the members of the audience, become the real actors; those on the stage are merely prompters who interpret *our* situation: we laugh for them. Ionesco forbids them even the slightest participation in their own humour. The «absurd» is born precisely out of the facts that the characters take themselves with extreme seriousness, that that seriousness is absurdly inappropriate to their ridiculous speech, that, alternatively, their amusement, when they are amused, is in stark contrast with the gravity of their language: in the «absurd» logic of Ionesco, the conjunctions of opposites might be said to imply one another. None of the ripostes is amusing *a priori*. «Today I witnessed the most extraordinary incident. It was absolutely incredible.» Mrs Martin one of the characters in The Bald Prima Donna exclaims. «Ah! Someone's going to make us laugh,» Mr Smith thinks out loud. The play proceeds as follows:

Mrs Martin: Well then, today, as I was going to the market to buy some vegetables, which are still going up and up in price...

Mrs Smith: Yes, where on earth's it going to end!

Mr Smith: You mustn't interrupt, my dear, naughty girl!

Mrs Martin: In the street, outside a restaurant, I saw a gentleman, respectably dressed and about fifty years old, perhaps less, who was...

Mr Smith: Who was what?

Mrs Smith: Who was what?

Mr Smith: (gallantly to his wife) Mustn't interrupt, my dear, it's disgraceful of you.

Mrs Smith: (all smiles) You interrupted first, skunk.

Mr Martin: Shh! *(Then, to his wife)* Tell them what the gentleman was doing.

Mrs Martin: Well, I know you'll say I'm making it up: he was kneeling on the ground and leaning forward.

Mr Martin:
Mr Smith: } Oh!
Mrs Smith:

Mrs Martin: Yes! Leaning forward!

Mr Martin:
Mr Smith: } It can't be true!
Mrs Smith:

Mrs Martin: Yes! Leaning forward he was! I went right up to him to see what he was doing...

Mr Martin:
Mr Smith: } What? What?
Mrs Smith:

Mrs Martin: His bootlaces had come undone and he was tying them up.

Mr Martin:
Mr Smith: } Fantastic!
Mrs Smith:

Mr Smith: If I'd heard that from anyone else, I'd never have believed it.

Mr Martin: Why not? There are even stranger things than that to be seen about the town. Only today, for example, I was in an Underground train, and there was a gentleman, as large as life, sitting there and calmly reading a newspaper.

Mrs Smith: What an odd character!

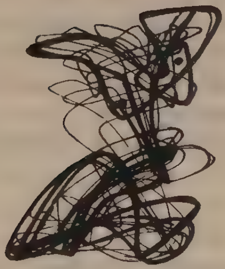
Mr Smith: Perhaps it was the same gentleman!

You will perhaps hesitate to laugh when you read this, but the humour is irresistible when it is competently acted: the comic element, as usual in Ionesco's work, is *specifically theatrical*.

All Ionesco's characters are insolid, robot-like creatures, all are ridiculous. It is not only that Ionesco requires us, the audience, to be the judge of what is funny: he prohibits himself from offering the slightest interpretation; there are none of the usual psychological or episodical gambits of comedy. The above example is an extreme one: the dialogue *as given* is rigorously «absurd». The words, the scenes, the speeches, the gestures are outlandishly combined: «Goodness! Nine o'clock! This evening for supper we had soup, fish, cold ham and mashed potatoes and a good English salad, and we had English beer to drink. The children drank English water. We had a very good meal this evening. And that's because we are English, because we live in a suburb of London and because our name is Smith...— Yoghourt is very good for the stomach, the lumbar regions, appendicitis and apotheosis. At least that's what Dr Mackenzie-King told me...» The clock has just struck nineteen times, (three English chimes): Mrs Smith has counted nine. —*English* humour- This qualification is only suggested to help us classify. The world of Ionesco is not a mental hospital of people we can analyse: it is utterly «foreign».

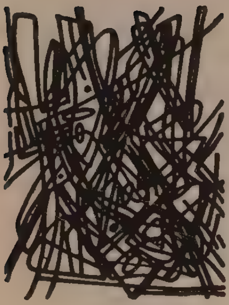
Nor is there any attempt to introduce the suspect «camera-eye», nor any of those romanesque or cinematic projections which would allow us to «get inside». Ionesco reverses procedures, he does not corrupt them. His characters remain free, pure, and gratuitous.

Too much so, perhaps. If the «absurd» become derisory, if nothing happens in *The Bald Prima Donna*, it matters only in so far as the dramatic intensity, built up in the play, tends to explode—the murder of the young rebel pupil in *The Lesson*, the impotence of the orator who must speak for the doorkeeper during the imaginary reception in *The Chairs*. Finally, these events are only epilogues, which the framework of the pieces don't demand; the spectator never wonders what the actor will *do*, but what he will *say*. For the language of Ionesco is only absurd to the extent that it *aspires* to be gratuitous.



(The following piece, of which the original title is *Le Nouveau Locataire*, is now published for the first time in any language.)

the new tenant



eugene ionesco

CHARACTERS

THE GENTLEMAN
THE CARETAKER
THE FIRST FURNITURE MOVER
THE SECOND FURNITURE MOVER

THE SET

A bare room, without any furniture. In the centre of the back wall, an open window. Double doors on the right and on the left. Light-coloured walls. Like the set and the furniture that will be brought on the stage later, the style of acting must be completely realistic.

Translator's note : *The scene has been shifted from Paris to London.*

As the curtain rises, a considerable din is heard off stage: the sounds of voices and hammers, snatches of song, children shouting, the noise of feet going up and coming down stairs, a barrel-organ, etc.

For a moment, as the noise goes on, the stage is empty: then THE CARETAKER comes in from the right, crashing the door open and singing in a loud voice; she is holding a bunch of keys.

CARETAKER (*as she enters singing*): La, la, la, tralalala, tralali, tralalalala-a-a! (and rattling the keys) La, la, la, la! (*She interrupts her singing to go and lean out of the open window*) Bill! Oh, Bill! Bill! Hullo there, George! Go and tell Bill 'e's got to see Mr. Clarence!... George... (*Silence*) George... (*Silence*) Well! If 'e ain't missing too! (*She tries to lean still further out of the window, singing at the top of her voice*) La, la, la, la, la, la la!

(While the row continues and THE CARETAKER *is still craning out of the window,* THE GENTLEMAN *comes silently in from the left: he is middle-aged, with a little black moustache, dressed in dark clothes; he is wearing a bowler hat, black jacket and striped trousers, his shoes are of patent leather; he is carrying gloves, and an overcoat over one arm, and he has a little attache case of black leather. He closes the door quietly behind him and walks silently up to* THE CARETAKER, *who does not notice him; he stops beside her and waits for an instant without moving while* THE CARETAKER *suddenly interrupts her singing as she becomes aware of the stranger's presence; but for some moments she does not change her position and turns round only when* THE GENTLEMAN *speaks).*

GENTLEMAN: Excuse me, are you the caretaker?

CARETAKER *(putting her hand to her heart, she cries out)*: Oh! Oh! Oh! *(and then hiccups)* I beg pardon, Sir. I've got the hiccups. (THE GENTLEMAN *does not stir)* 'Ave you only just come in?

GENTLEMAN: Just this moment.

CARETAKER: I was tryin' to see if Bill — or George perhaps — or someone else anyway, was in the yard... It's about going to see Mr. Clarence. Well!... so you've arrived then?

GENTLEMAN: As you can see.

CARETAKER: I wasn't expectin' you, not for today I wasn't... I thought you was meant to come tomorrow... Pleased to see you, anyway. Did you 'ave a good journey? Not too tired, I 'ope? Give me quite a turn, you did! I suppose you got finished sooner than you expected! That must be it. It's just because it took me by surprise, like. *(She hiccups)* It's the hiccups. Shock, you know. It's only what you might expect. Good thing the last lot, the people what was 'ere before you, you know, moved everything out in time. I'm not sure as 'ow I know what he used to do, mind. They said they'd send me some postcards. Worked for the government. Not a bit nervy, 'e wasn't. I suppose you wouldn't be? Would you? Don't know what department he worked for. I've forgot. 'E told me once. Me and them government departments! And my first husband was an office boy. They were good folks. Used to tell me everything, they did. I get used to folks' little secrets, I do. Mum's the word for me! 'Er — the old lady, I mean — she didn't used to work. Never lifted a finger in 'er life. I used to look after the place for 'em, she used to 'ave someone in to run errands for 'er and when she didn't used to come, it was me again! *(She hiccups)* What a fright you gave me! I wasn't expectin' you till tomorrow. Or the day after. Used to have a little dog, they did, they 'ated cats, but then cats isn't allowed in this establishment. 'Course it's all the same to me, it's the landlord what says so! Regular sort of folk they were — no children, of course — off they'd go to the country every Sunday to some cousins of theirs, 'olidays in Devonshire — that's where the old gentleman came from, that's where they've gone to live now, but they didn't used to like the cider they 'ave there — said it used to go to their 'eads, liked a drop of port now and again, just a drop of course — *old* they were, even when they were young — well, there it is, we 'aven't all got the same ideas, 'ave we? Take me, for instance. I'm not like that. Still they were nice folk. And what about you? In business, are you? Clerk? Got your own money, perhaps? Pension? Oh, but not yet, you're too young for that, though you never know, some of them give up early when they're tired, don't they? And when they've *got* a little money, 'course everybody can't, good luck to them that can, that's what I say. Got any family?

Gentleman: (*laying his case and overcoat on the floor*) No, I'm afraid not.

Caretaker: That's right, put your case down. Nice bit of leather—mustn't have an Irishman's rest. You can put it where you like. Well I'm blowed! 'iccups 'ave gone! Got over me fright! Why don't you take your 'at off and make yourself comfortable. (The Gentleman *adjusts his hat more firmly on his head*) Oh, I shouldn't bother to take your 'at off, Sir. Of course, you're at 'ome now, aren't you? Last week it wasn't your 'ome yet—there's always change—it was *their* 'ome—well, can't be 'elped—you 'ave to get old—it's all a question of age—now this is *your* 'ome, I'm not the one to say it ain't—very nice 'ere it is, a good 'ouse—must be twenty years now—my, that's a good long stretch...

(*Without saying a word,* The Gentleman *takes a few paces in the empty room, and looks around carefully, at the walls, the doors, the ceiling: now he has his hands behind his back*)

Caretaker: Ooh! They left everything proper, Sir! Clean folk they were, really nice people. Mm? Well, of course they 'ad their faults like you and me—bit proud they was and not what you might call talkative, not talkative by a long chalk—never said anything much about anything to me, they didn't—only silly things—'im—the old 'un, I mean—well, 'e was what you might call all right—but 'er, not 'er—threw 'er cat out of the window, she did—'it the landlord on the 'ead—still, didn't 'urt my flowers—what a thud! And as for 'im, 'e didn't 'alf used to beat 'er, if you can believe it, Sir, in these days—oh, that was their business—didn't go poking my nose in—when I come up once, 'e was going for 'er with 'is fists, something awful—Screaming she was, 'You brute! You bleeding bastard!' (*She bursts out laughing; at this moment* The Gentleman *is having a closer look at the state of the walls, still without uttering a word; he inspects the doors and the locks, moves his hand over them, shakes his head, etc., while* The Caretaker *watches every movement as she goes on talking; the din outside continues*) Oh, I 'ad to laugh, Sir—but there, they're away now, mustn't tell tales—just as though they were dead, not *just* the same p'raps, specially as it's all the same really—very nice they was, can't say I 'ad anything to grumble about, except for New Year's Day... Oh, don't you go worrying yourself about the 'ouse, Sir, *that's* sound enough—this 'ouse wasn't born yesterday, don't make 'em like that nowadays... You'll be all right 'ere, that you will... the neighbours are good folk, it's all 'armony 'ere, always nice and quiet—I've never once 'ad to call the police in, 'cept for the third floor front—hinspector 'e is, shouts out all the time, wants to arrest everybody, 'e does...

Gentleman (*pointing*): I beg your pardon, the window! (*in an even, expressionless tone of voice*)

Caretaker: Oh, but of course, Sir—I'm only too willing to do for you. I don't ask very much, Sir. Get on fine, you an' me will, you won't 'ave any insurance stamps to worry you...

Gentleman (*same gesture, same calm*): The window, please!

Caretaker: Oh yes, Sir, I *am* sorry—I was forgettin'. (*As she closes the window, there is a little less noise to be heard*) ...You know 'ow it is, Sir, one word leads to the next and don't time fly? (The Gentleman *continues his inspection*) I've closed the window for you, just as you wanted—closes nice and easy. (The Gentleman *inspects the window fasteners and the window itself*) Of course it looks out on the yard, but it's nice and bright as you can see, that's because it's on the sixth floor...

Gentleman: There was nothing available on the ground floor.

Caretaker: Oh! Don't think I don't know what you mean—it's no joke, the sixth floor, not when there's no lift...

Gentleman (*rather to himself*): That's not the point. I'm not at all tired.

Caretaker: Oh, I see. Then why, Sir?... I suppose you don't like the sun? 'Course, it's true it can 'urt your eyes! When you get to a certain age, you can get on quite well without it, burns your skin right off, it does...

Gentleman: Not at all.

Caretaker: Well, not *right* off, of course. You 'aven't anything to sleep on tonight, 'ave you? I can lend you a bed! (*For some minutes,* The Gentleman, *still engrossed in his examination of the room, has been deciding where to put the furniture that will be arriving, pointing out to himself the various positions; he takes a tape-measure out of his pocket and starts measuring*) I'll 'elp you to arrange the furniture, don't you worry about that, I'll give you some ideas—plenty of them about—won't be the first time neither—since I'm going to look after you—you won't see it come today, your furniture, at any rate, they won't be bringing it as quick as that, just you see, I know all their little tricks, them tradespeople's all the same...

Gentleman: Yes, indeed.

Caretaker: *You* think they're going to bring all your things today, do you? No 'arm in *thinking*—suits me all right, I've got no bed to lend you, but mind it'd surprise *me*, 'cause I *know* 'em—My, but I've seen 'em before, this lot's the first, they won't come, you mark my words, it's a Saturday—no, it ain't, it's a Wednesday—I've got a bed for you... since I'm going to do for you... (*She goes to open the windows*)

Gentleman: If you don't mind!

Caretaker: What's the matter? (*She turns again to open the window*) I've got to call George to tell 'im to tell Bill to go and see Mr. Clarence...

Gentleman: Leave the window alone, please.

Caretaker: It's all on account of Mr Clarence, what wants to know if Mr Eustace, who's a friend of Mr Bill's and George's too, since they're what you might call relations, not exactly, but in a kind of way...

Gentleman: Please leave the window alone.

Caretaker: All right, all right, I 'eard you, you don't want me to—wouldn't 'ave done no 'arm—you're in your rights of course, it's your window, not mine. I don't want no window—I get you, it's you give the orders, it's just as *you* like, I won't touch it, you're the boss in your own place—don't pay much for it either—still, no business of mine—the window, that's yours, too, you can buy anything when you've got a spot of money, that's life for you—I don't say nothing, I keeps to myself, it's your affair—'ave to go down six flights of stairs now to look for Bill, poor old woman like me—Ah, well! Can't 'elp men 'aving their little ways, don't think about nothing they don't—but I'll do just what you like, you know, it's all right with me, that don't worry me, suits me fine that does, I'm going to look after you, be as though I was your servant, like, won't it, Sir?

Gentleman: No, I'm afraid it won't.

Caretaker: Beg pardon, Sir?

Gentleman: I shan't be needing your services, I'm afraid.

Caretaker: Well, I like that! After all the time you've been asking me to do for you! Bit of bad luck I didn't 'ave no witness, took you at your word, I did, got proper took in... Too kind-'earted, that's me...

Gentleman: I beg your pardon. Please don't get upset about it.

Caretaker: Well, that's all right then. (*A knock at the door, left*)

Gentleman: The furniture!

Caretaker: *I'll* open the door. Don't you disturb yourself. I'm the one to open the door. Must wait on you, you know. I'm your servant. (*She goes to open the door, but* The Gentleman *steps in front of her and stops her*)

Gentleman (*still very calmly*): Please don't do anything like that!

(*He walks to the door on the left and opens it, while* The Caretaker, *hands on hips, exclaims:*)

Caretaker: Well, that's a bit of all right! They make up to you, promise you the 'ole world, and then they go back on their word!

(The Gentleman *opens the door and the* First Furniture Mover *comes in*)

1st Furniture Mover: 'Day to you!

Gentleman: Is the furniture here?

1st Furniture Mover: Can we bring it up?

Gentleman: Yes, if you like.

1st Furniture Mover: Very well, Sir. (*He goes out*)

Caretaker: You won't never be able to arrange all that furniture by yourself, Sir.

Gentleman: That will be all right. I shall have the removal men to help me.

Caretaker: Well you 'ardly want *strangers* to do it, do you? I don't even know that one, I've never seen 'im before, it's not safe! You ought to 'ave asked my 'ubby. Ought never to have let 'im come in, don't do to trust no-one—you never know, you know, that's just 'ow things 'appen—foolish I call it when there's my old man, my second you know, don't know what 'appened to the first—he's down below, got nothing to do, 'asn't got a job—'e's 'efty enough you know, would 'elp 'im to earn a bit, why give your money away to other people, it don't do no good, 'e could bring it up all right, 'e's tubercular you know, still, got to earn 'is bit, 'asn't 'e?—Them strikers's right, so was my first 'ubby, didn't want to be mixed up in it, so off 'e went and then everyone's surprised!—Oh well, I'm not a bad sort really, you know, I'll look after you, wouldn't mind looking after you at all...

Gentleman: I'm afraid I really shan't be needing your services. I'm extremely sorry. I shall be looking after myself, you see.

Caretaker (*losing her temper and shouting*): He says 'e's sorry, does 'e! Thinks 'e can do what he likes, does 'e!—Oooh! I don't like these sort of goings on, you can't make no fool out of me! I wish the old couple 'adn't gone, they weren't like that at all. As kind and obliging as you could wish for! They're all alike, one's as bad as another! Make you waste all your time, as though I 'adn't got nothing else to do! Tells me to come up, 'e does, and then...

(*The noise increases off-stage, especially the sound of hammers.* The Gentleman *pulls a wry face;* The Caretaker *screams out into the wings:*) Don't make so much noise! I can't 'ear myself speak (*To* The Gentleman) It's all right, I'm not going to open your window, *I* don't want to break nobody's window-panes—I'm respectable, I am, no one never 'ad anything to say about that—So I've been wastin' my time, 'ave I?—and all that washing to do, better for me if I 'adn't listened to you!

(*The door on the left opens noisily to let the* 1st Furniture Mover *appear, carrying two very small stools, while* The Caretaker's *tirade goes on*)

1st Furniture Mover (*to* Gentleman): Here's the first lot, anyway!

Caretaker (*to the* 1st Furniture Mover, *who takes no notice*) Don't you believe a word 'e says, my lad...

1st Furniture Mover (*to* Gentleman): Where shall I put them?

CARETAKER (*as before*): ...A pack of lies, you needn't think 'e'll pay you for it, think they can buy everything with money!

GENTLEMAN (*calmly to the* 1st FURNITURE MOVER): Would you mind putting one of them there? and one there! (*He points either side of the door on the left*)

CARETAKER (*as before*): 'E'll make you sweat, 'e will.

1st FURNITURE MOVER (*as before*): Very good, Sir! (*He sets the stools down as directed*)

CARETAKER (*as before*): ...Work yourself to death, that's all life is for the likes of us...

(*The* 1st FURNITURE MOVER *goes out;* THE CARETAKER *turns towards* THE GENTLEMAN)

CARETAKER: I don't know who you *are*, but I know who *I* am. I know your sort... Mrs Fairchild, that's me.

GENTLEMAN (*still calm, taking money from his pocket*): Please take this for your trouble! (*Offering her money*)

CARETAKER: Well, I never! Who do you take me for?... I'm no pauper, wasn't my fault if I couldn't 'ave any kids, that's on account of my old man, they'd be grown up now, they would—I don't want your money! (*She takes the money and puts it in her apron-pocket*) Very good of you, I'm sure, Sir!... No! It's no good, you can make as much fuss as you like, you won't catch me looking after you, not the likes of you, you won't your sort's not for me—'e don't need no one, 'e don't, wants to do it all for 'isself, 'e does—fine thing that is, too, at your time o' life... (*She rambles on, while* THE GENTLEMAN *walks calmly to the door on the left, exchanges the position of the two stools and moves back to judge the effect*) ...a bad lot, that's what 'e is, a bad lot in the 'ouse, don't need nobody 'e don't, not even a blessed dog to keep 'im comp'ny—that's the sort that prowls round the streets at night—what a time to live in! Never wanted nobody like that, I didn't, fine state of affairs, we only 'ave respectable folks in our 'ouse-- (*Still louder*)—that's the sort that frightens folks on purpose when they're looking out of the window, might have broken my neck and don't need nothing 'e don't. Only wanted to pass the time o' day, don't do no one no harm, don't get much fun I don't, 'cept the pictures now and again and that's about all, don't even know what they want, they don't... (THE GENTLEMAN, *who has finally put the stools back as they were, moves off again to admire them*) ...don't know much about life, that sort don't, don't nothing but kick up a fuss...

GENTLEMAN (*inspecting the stools with a satisfied look, but he is too phlegmatic to show much emotion*): Yes, they're better that way!

(*The* 1st FURNITURE MOVER *comes in through the left-hand door, noisily, with a vase in his hand*)

CARETAKER (*going on in the same way*): Don't 'alf 'ave a fine opinion of themselves either, they do—nothing but a lot of thieves, louts and good-for-nothings...

Gentleman (*to* 1*st* **Furniture Mover**): Here, you may put it here. (*Points to the left-hand corner of the stage, at the back*)

1st Furniture Mover: There? Very good, Sir! (*Goes to the spot indicated*)

Caretaker: Makes all sorts of shameful suggestions to you, they does—for money...

Gentleman (*to* 1*st* **Furniture Mover**, *who has not put the object down right in the corner*): No! In the corner, right in the corner, there...

Caretaker: That sort of lark don't cut no ice with me, not with me, it don't!

1st Furniture Mover: Here?

Gentleman: Yes, there, it's fine like that...

Caretaker: Oh, no! Money don't buy everything, money don't pervert everyone... *I* won't have it anyhow!

1st Furniture Mover (*to* **The Gentleman**): But where are you going to put the rest?

Gentleman (*to the* 1*st* **Furniture Mover**): Oh, please don't trouble about that, I've thought it all out, you'll see, there'll be room...

(*The* 1*st* **Furniture Mover** *goes off left*)

Caretaker: Not that it's not what I weren't expecting, your sort don't catch me napping, I know 'em, I do, all them fine gentlemen prowling round the streets, I've got my eyes open, I 'ave, you don't catch me 'aving any, run after anything in a skirt they will, but they don't 'ave me on! I know what you're up to, I know your little game, wanted to make a proper tart out of me, didn't you? Me! Mother of five kids too! Fine cheek you 'ave, come making nasty suggestions to a mother like me, with five kids too—I'm not so daft as you think I am, I've got my 'ead screwed on all right, good thing for me I 'ave. Listen 'ere, Sir, there's a police hinspector lives right in this very 'ouse. I'll charge you, I will, I'll 'ave you arrested and then there's my old man too to look after my hinterests... Oh, no! Don't need nobody, 'e don't, eh? We'll see about that!

Gentleman (*who does not look at all menacing, turns towards* **The Caretaker**; *he is extremely calm, does not raise his voice and keeps his dignity perfectly, but he gives a surprising impression of authority*): Please don't upset yourself! Take my advice and accept my apologies; otherwise you will only make yourself ill!

Caretaker (*somewhat intimidated*): How dare you talk to me like that! To me! Mother of five children! You won't 'ave me on like that, you won't! Now just you listen to me! You no sooner get 'ere and you 'ave me come upstairs, you takes me on, and then, without not so much as a by-your-leave, you turns me out again! When the old couple were 'ere, 'ere in this very room where you're standing now...

Gentleman (*without making a gesture—his hands folded behind his back*): May I suggest you go back to your work? The postman may have called.

(The Caretaker *stops talking as though she were suddenly really frightened;* The Gentleman, *motionless, stares at her; then he goes back to the vase to admire it; taking advantage of the fact that* The Gentleman's *back is turned,* The Caretaker *makes a dash for the door on the right, muttering to herself*)

Caretaker: The vase is a bit of all right! (*Then, having reached the door, she cries in a louder voice*) A mother with five kids! You won't have me on a bit of string! I'll go and see the hinspector, I will! (*As she turns to go out she bumps into the 2nd* Furniture Mover, *who is just coming in*) You just watch where you're going! (*Then she goes out, still shouting*) You won't have me on! You won't have me on!

(*While* The Gentleman *turns to the newcomer*)

2nd Furniture Mover: Good-day, Sir. I've come about your furniture, Sir.

Gentleman: Ah, yes! Good morning. Thank you. Your associate is here already. (*He points to the left, over his shoulder*)

2nd Furniture Mover: Good, I'll go and help him. (*He crosses the stage towards the door on the left; as he does so he catches sight of the two little stools and the little vase in the corner, which must be about 18 inches high*) I see he's already started bringing them up.

Gentleman: Oh, yes! He's already started bringing them up.

2nd Furniture Mover: Has he been here long?

Gentleman: No, only a few minutes.

2nd Furniture Mover: Is there much left?

Gentleman: Quite a lot, yet. (*Noise off left*) He's coming up now.

1st Furniture Mover (*off stage*): Are you there, Fred? Come and give me a hand, will you?

(*The 2nd* Furniture Mover *goes off left, disappears for a moment and then he can just be seen coming in again backwards and straining hard; meanwhile* The Gentleman *holds out his arm to indicate different places in the room, pointing to the floor, to the walls, etc., as though it were helping him to imagine the arrangement of the furniture, saying:*)

Gentleman: One... two... three... four... one...

(*The 2nd* Furniture Mover, *coming in backwards, is almost completely visible, though it is still not possible to see what he is carrying with so much difficulty; from the wings can be heard the voice of the—*)

1st Furniture Mover (*straining*): That's it... go ahead now!

Gentleman (*as before*): One... two... three... four... one...

(*Both* Furniture Movers *are now visible, struggling to carry between them another empty vase, identical with the first, and obviously extremely light in weight; but their united effort should appear tremendous, so much so that they are in fact stumbling under their burden*)

1st Furniture Mover: Come on now—once more!...

2nd Furniture Mover: Keep a good grip on it, there!...

Gentleman (*as before*): One... two... three...

1st Furniture Mover (*to* The Gentleman): Where's this one got to go?

Gentleman (*turning towards them*): Let's see... yes, put it there, please! (*He points to a spot to the left of the door on the left, near the footlights*) That's it!

(*The two* Furniture Movers *have put the vase down; they straighten up, rubbing their arms and their backs, taking off their caps to wipe their forehead; meanwhile* The Caretaker's *voice can be heard from time to time raised in conversation and mixed up with other voices, but all the noise will subside gradually*)

2nd Furniture Mover: Well, I hope everything's not going to be like that!

Gentleman: Are you tired, gentlemen?

1st Furniture Mover: Oh, it's nothing... we're used to it, you know... (*To his colleague*) Mustn't waste time! Shall we go? (*They both go out through the door on the left, while—*)

Gentleman (*counting*): One... two... three... four... one... two... three... (*Then he moves about, choosing the places to put his things and sometimes using the tape-measure he is holding in his hand*) There, that will be fine... and we can put that there... and that can go here... That's it...

(*The* 1st Furniture Mover *comes in from the left carrying another vase, this time by himself but still with difficulty*)

Gentleman (*pointing towards the other side of the stage, to the right-hand corner at the back. The* 1st Furniture Mover *goes and puts the object down, while* The Gentleman *goes on measuring*): One... two... three... five... one... two...

seven... Good... that's it... that'll be fine...

1st Furniture Mover: Is that where you want it, Sir?

(*The larger and heavier the articles that the* Furniture Movers *bring on, the easier they will seem to carry them, until finally it will look like child's play*)

Gentleman: Yes, that will do nicely.

(*Then the* 1st Furniture Mover *goes off left, while the* 2nd Furniture Mover *comes in through the same door, carrying another vase exactly like the rest*)

Gentleman: Will you put it there, please? (*He points to the right-hand corner, near the footlights*)

2nd Furniture Mover: Ah, yes! (*He puts it down and goes off left while the* 1st Furniture Mover *comes in through the same door carrying two more tiny stools, exactly like the first ones, and still with great effort*)

1st Furniture Mover: And where are these to go, Sir?

Gentleman (*pointing either side of the door on the right*): There and there, of course; then they'll match the two on the other side.

1st Furniture Mover: Of course, I should have thought... (*The 1st*

FURNITURE MOVER *sets the objects down in their place*) Phew! Is there still any room left? (*He stops for a moment, with nothing in his hands, in the middle of the room, then he goes off left*)

GENTLEMAN: There'll be enough. There's sure to be enough. I have it all worked out. (*To the 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER, *who enters from the left, with a suitcase*) Put it there please... (*He points to the right of the window at the back; as the 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER *moves towards the spot*, THE GENTLEMAN *stops him*): I'm sorry. Not there. There... (THE GENTLEMAN *points to the left of the window; the 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER *sets the object down, saying—*)

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: Right, Sir. It would help if you could be a little more definite, Sir.

GENTLEMAN: Why, yes, of course.

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: And then we won't tire ourselves out unnecessarily.

GENTLEMAN: Of course, I understand.

1st FURNITURE MOVER (*coming in from the left with a pedestal table while the 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER *goes out left*): And this? Where shall I put this?

GENTLEMAN: Ah yes... let me see... it's not easy to find the right little place for it...

1st FURNITURE MOVER: Here, perhaps, Sir? (*He carries the table to the left of the window*)

GENTLEMAN: The ideal place! (*These tables are all in different shapes and colours*) Ideal!

2nd FURNITURE MOVER (*coming in left with another pedestal table*): And this?

GENTLEMAN (*indicating a place to the left of the first table*): Here, if you don't mind.

2nd FURNITURE MOVER (*puts it down, then*): But there won't be any room for your plates!

GENTLEMAN: Everything's been accounted for.

2nd FURNITURE MOVER (*looking round the stage*): I don't quite see...

GENTLEMAN: Yes, I assure you.

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: Well, if you say so. (*He goes off left, while the 1st* FURNITURE MOVER *arrives, with another table*)

GENTLEMAN (*to 1st* FURNITURE MOVER): Beside the last one. (*Then while the 1st* FURNITURE MOVER *places the table and goes out and the 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER *comes in, still from the left, with another table,* THE GENTLEMAN *traces a circle on the floor in chalk; then, more carefully, a larger circle in the middle of the stage;* THE GENTLEMAN *stops and straightens up to show the 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER *where to put his latest pedestal table*) There, along by the wall, next to the other! (*While the 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER *puts it down*, THE GENTLEMAN, *who has finished tracing his circle, straightens up again and says*): That will be fine! (*While the 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER *goes off, still on the left, the*

1st **Furniture Mover** *arrives with another pedestal table)* Next to the last one!

(He points out the place, the 1st **Furniture Mover** *puts it down and goes off left.* **The Gentleman,** *alone for a moment, counts the pedestal tables)*

Gentleman: Yes... that's it... now we shall have to... *(The 2nd* **Furniture Mover** *comes in from the right with another pedestal table)* All round the room... *(Then, from the left, the 1st* **Furniture Mover)** All around...

(Both **Furniture Movers** *go off, the 1st on the left, to come on again from the right, the 2nd on the right, to come in again from the left, and they bring on more tables and other objects such as chairs, screens, table-lamps, piles of books, etc., which they set down, one after the other, all round the stage and along the walls, meeting and passing each other as they do so. The movement is carried out in such a way that there is always one* **Furniture Mover** *on the stage throughout the scene that follows)*

Gentleman: All around the room, all around... all around... *(Then, when the walls are all lined with the first row of furniture,* **The Gentleman** *says to the 1st* **Furniture Mover,** *who comes in, empty-handed, from the left)* Now you can bring a step-ladder! *(The 1st* **Furniture Mover** *goes out the way he came in, the 2nd* **Furniture Mover** *comes on from the right)* A step-ladder! *(The 2nd* **Furniture Mover** *goes out the way he came in)*

Gentleman *(looking around the walls and rubbing his hands together)*: There now! Now it's beginning to take shape. It'll be a very comfortable sort of place. It won't be at all bad.

(The two **Furniture Movers** *come in from left and right, each from the side opposite the one by which they went out;* **The Gentleman** *indicates to the one coming from the left the wall on the right, and vice-versa; he says nothing)*

1st **Furniture Mover:** Right ho!

2nd **Furniture Mover:** Right ho!

(They cross and place their ladders against the walls indicated)

Gentleman: Leave the ladders there. You can bring in the pictures now! *(They come down off their ladders and go off right and left. As he moves towards the exit, the 2nd* **Furniture Mover** *steps on one of the chalk circles, the one in the middle of the stage)* Be careful there! Don't spoil my circle.

2nd **Furniture Mover:** Oh, yes! We'll try not to.

Gentleman: Be careful! *(The 2nd* **Furniture Mover** *goes out while the 1st* **Furniture Mover** *enters from the opposite side with a large painting representing the head of a hideous old man)* Be careful, be careful of my circles. *(This said in a calm and neutral tone)*

1st **Furniture Mover:** I'll try. It's not easy when you're loaded...

Gentleman: Now hang the picture up...

1st Furniture Mover: Yes, Sir. (*He climbs up the ladder and carefully hangs the picture. The 2nd* Furniture Mover *enters from the side opposite the one from which the 1st* Furniture Mover *has just come in, also carrying a large painting representing another hideous old man*)

Gentleman: My ancestors. (*To the 2nd* Furniture Mover) Now go up the ladder and hang the picture.

2nd Furniture Mover (*going up the ladder against the opposite wall, holding the picture*): It's not easy, with all your circles. Especially when we come to the heavy objects. We can't watch out for everything. (*He busies himself hanging the picture*)

Gentleman: Oh yes you can, if you really want to. (The Gentleman *picks up from amongst the various objects brought upon the stage a book or a box or some other still smaller object and takes it to the centre of the stage where he sets it down after having inspected it by raising it above his head; meanwhile, the workmen are busy fixing the paintings carefully on the two walls;* The Gentleman *could also adjust the position of some of the furniture slightly or retrace his chalk circles again; all this without a word spoken. A slight sound of hammers and the other exterior noises can still be heard, but already transformed into music.* The Gentleman *contemplates the painting and the room in general with an air of satisfaction. The two workmen have finished, and so has* The Gentleman: *the work should have lasted some time, acted without words. The* Furniture Movers *descend from their ladders; they go and set the ladders down in some place where there is a little space, as for example near the two doors; then they join* The Gentleman, *who studies first one of the pictures, then the other*)

1st Furniture Mover (*pointing to the two pictures, speaking to* The Gentleman): All right?

Gentleman (*to* Furniture Mover). All right?

2nd Furniture Mover: Looks all right to me.

Gentleman (*inspecting the pictures*): They're firmly fixed. (*Pause*) Bring in the heavy objects.

2nd Furniture Mover: What a thirst I've got! (*Mops his brow*)

Gentleman: We must have the sideboard then. (*Both* Furniture Movers *go towards the door on the right;* The Gentleman *turns towards the window*) One... yes... one here...

(*Before the two* Furniture Movers *can reach the door on the right, the two folding doors open of themselves and a sideboard slides onto the stage, propelled by an invisible force; the folding doors close again and the* Furniture Movers *seize the sideboard and glance towards* The Gentleman, *who with a gesture shows them where to put it*)

Both Furniture Movers (*who are now near the centre of the stage*): Where?

Gentleman (*his back to the audience, his hands extended towards the window*): But there, of course!...

1st Furniture Mover: You'll shut all the light out.

Gentleman: There's electric light, isn't there?

(*The* 1st **Furniture Mover** *pushes the sideboard against the window; it fails to block it up completely; it is not high enough. The 2nd* **Furniture Mover** *goes to one of the doors and switches on the ceiling light; he takes hold of a picture representing a winter landscape, which has glided on to the stage by itself through the folding doors, and places it on top of the sideboard: this time the window is completely masked. The* 1st **Furniture Mover** *opens the sideboard, takes a bottle out, takes a swig from it, passes it to the 2nd* **Furniture Mover**, *who does the same, and then offers it to* **The Gentleman**)

Gentleman: No, thank you. I never touch it.

(*Then both the* **Furniture Movers** *drink in turn out of the bottle, handing it backwards and forwards, and looking at the blocked-up window*)

Gentleman: Much better, like that.

(*The two* **Furniture Movers**, *too, still drinking from time to time, turn to face the window concealed by the sideboard and the canvas representing winter, so that, in this way, all three have their backs to the audience*)

1st Furniture Mover: (*with approval*): Ah ha!

2nd Furniture Mover: (*with approval*): Ah ha!

Gentleman: It's not quite right (*indicating the picture*). I don't like it... Turn it round!

(*The two* **Furniture Movers** *turn the picture while* **The Gentleman** *watches them; only the back of the picture is to be seen, with its dark frame and hanging cord; then the two* **Furniture Movers** *step away a little and pick up the bottle again which they go on drinking out of; then they go to stand on either side of* **The Gentleman**, *still with their backs to the public, and gaze again at the sideboard with the picture on top of it in silence for several moments*)

Gentleman: I like it better like that.

1st Furniture Mover: It's much nicer.

Gentleman: It's much nicer. More restrained.

2nd Furniture Mover: It's much nicer. More restrained.

Gentleman: Ah, yes, it's very much nicer, more restrained.

1st Furniture Mover: Ah yes...

2nd Furniture Mover: Ah yes...

Gentleman: You can't see anything this way.

1st Furniture Mover: Well that's something.

(*Silence*)

2nd Furniture Mover (*after a moment, turning the bottle neck downwards*): There isn't any more.

1st Furniture Mover: The last drop.

2nd Furniture Mover (*still holding the bottle in the same way, to* **The Gentleman**): There isn't any more.

Gentleman: I don't think so either. (*The* 1st **Furniture Mover**

takes the bottle from the 2nd FURNITURE MOVER *and puts it in the sideboard, which he closes*) Won't have any more trouble from the neighbours now.

1st FURNITURE MOVER: Better for everybody.

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: Everybody will be happy.

GENTLEMAN: Everyone will be happy. (*A moment of silence*) To work. Let's go on. My armchair.

1st FURNITURE MOVER: Where can we put it?

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: Where can we put it?

GENTLEMAN: In the circle. (*He points to the circle in the middle*) You won't be able to spoil my circle any more.

1st FURNITURE MOVER (*to* THE GENTLEMAN): You'll be able to see it better.

GENTLEMAN (*to the* 1*st* FURNITURE MOVER): Will you go and fetch it?

(*The* 1*st* FURNITURE MOVER *goes to the door on the right*)

GENTLEMAN (*to the* 2*nd* FURNITURE MOVER): Now for the heavy furniture in pink wood.

(*The* 1*st* FURNITURE MOVER *arrives at the door on the right: the armchair glides on, pushed from behind: he takes hold of it. The* 2*nd* FURNITURE MOVER *goes to the door on the left: the half of a wardrobe appears: he seizes hold of it and pulls it to him towards the centre of the stage: all the movements have slowed down: from now on all the furniture comes on through the two doors alternately, propelled from behind: each item only half appears: the* FURNITURE MOVERS *pull it towards them, and when it has been pulled right into the room, something else slides on, half visible, and so on. The* 1*st* FURNITURE MOVER, *then, has hold of the armchair, while the other man is pulling on from the other doorway a huge wardrobe on its side: the* 1*st* FURNITURE MOVER *sets the armchair down within the circle.*)

GENTLEMAN (*looking at the pink wardrobe*): It's a beautiful pink, isn't it ?

1st FURNITURE MOVER (*after placing the armchair within the circle*): Good armchair.

GENTLEMAN (*feeling the upholstery*): Yes, it's very soft. Well-padded. (*To the* 1*st* FURNITURE MOVER): Please don't stop bringing the things in. (*The* 1*st* FURNITURE MOVER *goes to the door on the right, where he finds a second pink wardrobe on its side: the* 2*nd* FURNITURE MOVER, *still dragging his wardrobe on, glances at* THE GENTLEMAN, *as though asking silently where to put it*)

GENTLEMAN: There!

(*The wardrobes in question—there could be four in all—will be disposed, always according to* THE GENTLEMAN'S *directions, along the three walls, parallel to the other rows of furnitures: first one, then the other of the two* FURNITURE MOVERS *will dart a questioning look at* THE GENTLEMAN *each time they have succeeded in dragging the furniture* *clear of the folding doors and* THE GENTLEMAN *will point and say to them—)*

GENTLEMAN: There! There! There! There!

(At each «There!», the FURNITURE MOVERS *nod their heads affirmatively and place the furniture; after the four wardrobes come smaller items — some more tables, settees too, wickerwork baskets, strange furniture never seen before, etc. It is all placed in front of the rest along the three walls, so that* THE GENTLEMAN *is confined in an ever-diminishing space in the centre of the stage; the action is like a ponderous kind of ballet and all the movements are made very slowly.)*

(While the FURNITURE MOVERS *are still bringing on the furniture and questioning him silently, while the furniture is still sliding on to the stage, pushed on from behind,* THE GENTLEMAN *is in the centre, with one hand on the back of the armchair and the other pointing.)*

GENTLEMAN: There... There... There... There... There...

There... There... There... There... There... There...

There... There... There... There... *(It should be arranged so that this action lasts a long time; in a slow and broken rhythm. Then, at a certain moment, the* 1st FURNITURE MOVER *brings on a radio set from the right; when his questioning glance alights on* THE GENTLEMAN, *the latter says, in a voice scarcely louder than before)*: Oh no! Oh dear me no!

1st FURNITURE MOVER: It doesn't work.

GENTLEMAN: Well, in that case... yes. Here. *(He indicates a spot near the armchair; the* 1st FURNITURE MOVER *deposits the article and moves off towards the right for more, while the* 2nd FURNITURE MOVER *comes up from the left, with the same look of interrogation, carrying a chamber-pot; to the* 2nd FURNITURE MOVER): Why yes, of course... here.

(He points to the other side of the armchair; the 2nd FURNITURE MOVER *lays the chamber-pot down and then they both move off their own side and come back again with other furniture so that the space surrounding* THE GENTLEMAN *gets smaller and smaller; now the action continues without words, in complete silence; little by little the sounds from outside,* THE CARETAKER'S *voice, etc., have died away; the* FURNITURE MOVERS *pad about noiselessly; the furniture appears on the stage quite silently; each time the* FURNITURE MOVERS *introduce a new item they still look questioningly at* THE GENTLEMAN *and the latter still indicates by gesture, without uttering a word, where to put the various articles, which are slowly but surely closing in on him. This dumb show, with its broken mechanical movements, should also last a long time, even longer, perhaps, than the previous scene of* THE GENTLEMAN'S *«There... There... There... There»: finally the* 2nd FURNITURE MOVER *brings on an enormous wall-clock from the left, while the other* FURNITURE MOVER *continues as before; when* THE GENTLEMAN *sees the clock,*

he shows surprise and uncertainty, then finally makes a sign of refusal; while the 2nd FURNITURE MOVER *takes the clock back to bring up another piece of furniture the 1st* FURNITURE MOVER *arrives with a second clock that resembles the first in every respect;* THE GENTLEMAN *dismisses him with a gesture, then changes his mind.)*

GENTLEMAN: But wait... after all, why not? (*The clock is brought up to the armchair, and* THE GENTLEMAN *points to a place near it; next the 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER *comes back with a large and very high screen; as he reaches the armchair the 1st* FURNITURE MOVER *comes up from his side also carrying a screen of the same height.*)

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: There'll be no room left!

GENTLEMAN: Oh, yes, there will. (*He sits down in his armchair within the circle.*) Like this there will.

(*The* FURNITURE MOVERS *bring up a second, and then a third screen and enclose* THE GENTLEMAN *on three sides, within the circle. Only the side facing the audience remains open.* THE GENTLEMAN *is sitting in the armchair, with his hat on his head, his face turned towards the public; on each side, the two* FURNITURE MOVERS, *their bodies hidden behind the screens, poke their heads round to have a look at* THE GENTLEMAN.)

1st FURNITURE MOVER: All right? You're comfortable now?

GENTLEMAN (*he nods his head*): It's good to feel at home.

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: You must have got rather tired. I should take a little rest.

GENTLEMAN: Don't stop, will you?... Is there still much left?

(*Dumb show.* THE GENTLEMAN *is seated, motionless, hat on head, facing the audience; the two* FURNITURE MOVERS *make their way, each to one of the two entrances; the folding doors are wide open; the two openings are completely blocked and one can just see a vast expanse of woodwork, green on the left, purple on the right, as high as the doors themselves, resembling the back of tall, wide cupboards; synchronizing their movements, each man looks at the door in front of him and scratches his head underneath his cap in a puzzled way; they shrug their shoulders and put their hands on their hips simultaneously; then, still moving together, they step back amongst the furniture, each man on his own side of the stage and gape at each other. Then:*)

1st FURNITURE MOVER: What shall we do?

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: What shall we do?

GENTLEMAN (*without moving*): Is there still much left? Isn't it finished yet?

(*The 1st* FURNITURE MOVER, *without answering* THE GENTLEMAN, *makes a meaningful gesture directed at the 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER, *a gesture expressing bewilderment, which the 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER *repeats.*)

GENTLEMAN (*without moving, still very calm*): Have you brought up *all* the furniture?

(Dumb show for a moment. Both FURNITURE MOVERS, *still standing where they were, turn towards their respective doors, and then towards* THE GENTLEMAN, *who can no longer see them.)*

1st FURNITURE MOVER: It's really rather awkward, Sir.

GENTLEMAN: What is awkward?

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: The rest of the furniture is too large and the doors are not high enough.

1st FURNITURE MOVER: Can't get it in.

GENTLEMAN: What is it that's left?

1st FURNITURE MOVER: Cupboards.

GENTLEMAN: The green and the purple ones?

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: Yes.

1st FURNITURE MOVER: And that's not all there is. There's still more to come.

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: The staircase is jammed from top to bottom. Nobody can get up or down.

GENTLEMAN: The yard is cram full too. So is the street.

1st FURNITURE MOVER: The traffic has come to a standstill in the town. Full of furniture.

2nd FURNITURE MOVER (*to* THE GENTLEMAN): At least you have nothing to complain about, Sir. You've got somewhere to sit.

1st FURNITURE MOVER: Perhaps the tube's still running.

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: No, it isn't.

GENTLEMAN (*still as before*): No. All the underground lines are blocked.

2nd FURNITURE MOVER (*to* THE GENTLEMAN): Some furniture! It's cluttering up the whole country.

GENTLEMAN: The Thames has stopped flowing, too. Dammed up. No more water.

1st FURNITURE MOVER: What can we do then, if we can't get any more in?

GENTLEMAN: It can't be left out of doors. Because of the weather.

(The FURNITURE MOVERS *are still speaking from their respective positions.)*

1st FURNITURE MOVER: Might be able to get it in through the attic. But then... we'd have to break the ceiling in.

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: Not necessary. Modern house. Sliding ceiling. (*To* THE GENTLEMAN): Did you know?

GENTLEMAN: No.

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: Well there you are. It's easy. Just have to clap your hands. (*He makes as though to do so*) The ceiling slides open.

GENTLEMAN (*from his armchair*): No... I'm afraid of the rain on the furniture. It's new and easily spoilt.

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: No fear of that, Sir. I know the idea. The ceiling opens and closes, opens and closes, just how you like.

1st FURNITURE MOVER: Come on then, perhaps we can...

GENTLEMAN (*from his armchair*): Providing you close it again at once. No carelessness, mind.

1st FURNITURE MOVER: We won't forget. *I'm* on the job. (*To the 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER): Ready?

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: Yes.

1st FURNITURE MOVER (*to* THE GENTLEMAN): All right?

GENTLEMAN: Right.

1st FURNITURE MOVER (*to the 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER): Go ahead.

(*The 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER *claps his hands. From the ceiling huge planks descend at the front of the stage, completely hiding from view* THE GENTLEMAN *in his high-walled enclosure; a few could also come down on to the stage amongst the furniture; the new tenant is thus completely walled-in; clambering over the furniture the 1st* FURNITURE MOVER, *after knocking three times without response on one of the screens at the side, makes his way, with a ladder, to the place where the planks have completed the enclosure; he holds in one hand a bunch of flowers that he tries to hide from the audience; silently he leans his ladder up on the right-hand side and climbs up; when he has reached the top of the plank at that side, he looks down into the enclosure and calls out to* THE GENTLEMAN.)

1st FURNITURE MOVER: That's it, Sir. Everything in. Are you nice and comfortable? Has the move gone off to your satisfaction?

GENTLEMAN'S VOICE (*just as it has always been; slightly muffled, that's all*): Ceiling. Close ceiling, please.

1st FURNITURE MOVER (*from the top of the ladder to his mate*): He wants you to close the ceiling. You forgot.

2nd FURNITURE MOVER (*in the same spot*): Oh, yes. (*He claps for the ceiling to close again.*) There you are.

GENTLEMAN'S VOICE: Thank you.

1st FURNITURE MOVER (*on the ladder*): Ah well, you've got a good sheltered spot there, you won't be cold... Are you all right?

GENTLEMAN'S VOICE (*after a silence*): All right.

1st FURNITURE MOVER: Hand me your hat, Sir, it might worry you.

(*After a short pause,* THE GENTLEMAN'S *hat can be seen appearing from within the enclosure.*)

1st FURNITURE MOVER (*taking the hat and throwing the flowers down inside*): That's right. You'll be more comfortable like that. Here are some flowers for you. (*To the 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER): Is that all?

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: Everything's in.

1st FURNITURE MOVER: Good. (*To* THE GENTLEMAN): We've got it all in, Sir, you're really at home now. (*He comes down off the ladder*): We'll be off. (*He leans the ladder against the wall, or perhaps he can prop it up, gently, without making a noise, somewhere amongst the other objects that hem* THE GENTLEMAN *in.*)

1st FURNITURE MOVER (*to the 2nd* FURNITURE MOVER): Come on.

(*The two* FURNITURE MOVERS, *each still keeping to his own side, make their way, rather blindly, and Heaven knows where, towards the back of the stage, aimlessly, towards invisible and problematical exits; for the window is blocked up and so are the entrances, with their folding doors wide open and the violently coloured woodwork that jams up the passage still showing.*)

1st FURNITURE MOVER (*at a certain moment, he stops,* THE GENTLEMAN'S *hat in his hand, turns round and directs his words from one end of the stage towards the concealed* GENTLEMAN): Is there anything you want?

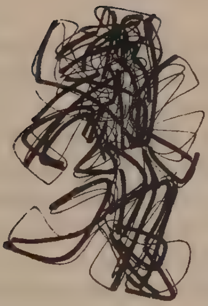
(*Silence.*)

2nd FURNITURE MOVER: Is there anything you want?

GENTLEMAN'S VOICE (*after a silence: not a movement on the stage*): Put out the light. (*Utter darkness*) Thank you.

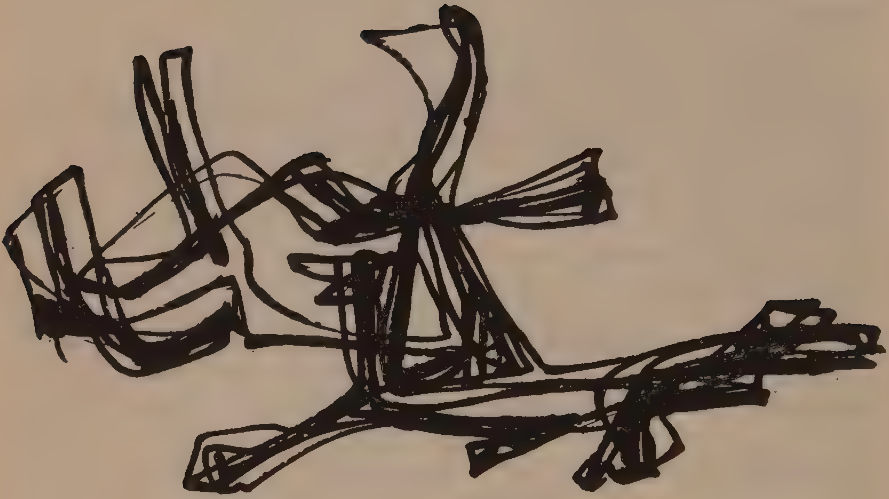
CURTAIN

(translated from the French by **Donald Watson**)



the oldster

italo svevo



IT was in April of this year that it happened, a month that brought us one dismal, rainy day after another, punctuated by brief, marvellous bursts of sunshine and even warmth.

I was returning home by automobile with Augusta after a short ride out to Capodistria. The sun having tired my eyes, I was drifting into a state of repose. Not sleep exactly, but inertia. My feeling was that of one who is quite withdrawn from the landscape about him; though, lacking a substitute, I still permitted myself to sense its presence: it fled past without any meaning whatever. After sunset much of its color fled too, the more because by that time the green fields had been replaced by the dingy houses and squalid streets I knew so well that I saw them even before they appeared, and gazing upon them was hardly more than sleeping.

In Piazza Goldoni we were stopped by the policeman and I pulled myself together. At that instant I caught sight of a very young girl coming toward us. Trying to avoid the other automobiles, she passed so closely as to brush against our own. She was wearing a white dress with bright green stripes, with green ribbons at the collar, and over it a light, green-striped mantelet partially covering her dress. Everything about her was a vigorous affirmation of the season. What a good-looking girl! The apparent danger in which she found herself was making her smile, and all the while her astonished, big black eyes were darting about, gauging distances. Her smile afforded one a glimpse of the white glow of her teeth against the rose coloring of her face; her hands were held high, at her breast, in an effort to make herself look smaller, and in one she clutched a pair of limp gloves. I saw her hands perfectly, their creamy complexion, their shape—long fingers and tiny palms tapering into the curve of her wrists.

And then—I scarcely know why—it occurred to me that it would be too cruel a thing if I were to let that moment escape without establishing some sort of rapport with her.—Too cruel! But I had to hurry; and my haste confused me. But then I remembered! A relation already existed. I knew her! Leaning toward the window to let her see me, I nodded with a smile designed to indicate my admiration of her youth and courage. But remembering that my mouth is full of gold, at once I turned off my smile, limiting myself simply to regarding her, seriously and intently. The girl had just time enough to give me a curious look, and she replied with a hesitant nod that lent a very conscience-smitten expression to her face: an expression so altering the light that a prism seemed to interpose itself between my eyes and her.

Fearing that she might witness the death of the girl under the wheels of one of the automobiles, Augusta had quickly raised her lorgnette. And conforming with me, she nodded, herself. Then she asked:

«Who's that girl?»

Her name had completely escaped me. But really wanting to remember, I sent my mind backward through time to find out; proceeding one by one through long-distant years of the past, at length I came upon her at the side of a friend of my father's.

«The daughter of old man Dondi,» I mumbled, not too sure.

Once having said it, however, I seemed to remember better than ever. Recollection of the girl also recalled to mind a small villa that stood surrounded by a little green garden. Something the girl had said, which had made everyone present laugh, returned along with this memory—«Why is it that tomcats never come off a roof alone, but always with a pussy cat?» It was precisely in that manner then, as just now in Piazza Goldoni, that she had shown herself to be such an unblushingly innocent girl. Back in those days I was quite innocent myself, for lovely and desirable as she was, instead of sweeping her into my arms, I had laughed right along with the others. I mean, thinking of her made me momentarily younger; I remembered having had the capacity to seize, to hold, to struggle...

Augusta cut short this disquieting reverie of mine with an outburst of laughter:

«By this time Dondi's daughter is as old as you! Now, who was that you nodded to? The Dondi girl was six years older than I. Come, you know that if you had seen her out there just now, rather than grinning in the face of danger like that girl, she would have been hobbling along—on the point of meeting her Maker under the wheels of our car.»

Once again, as though reaching me through a prism, the light suddenly changed. I was not quick to show myself in sympathy with Augusta's laughter. But I had to be! Else she might learn the importance of this adventure of mine; it would mark the first time that I would have confessed to her.

«You're right. It hadn't occurred to me. Day by day everything changes a little, so that in a year the change is considerable, and in seventy years considerable indeed.» Then I spoke from the heart. I added, rubbing my eyes as if I had been asleep: «I forgot that I was old myself, and that everyone of my generation cannot but be old too. Even those whom I haven't seen grow old, even the ones who have gone into hiding and whom you never hear anything about, who are not watched by anybody—they're growing old too, daily.» In my attempt to conceal the flash of youth I had been granted, I was becoming childish. It necessitated a change in voice, and with the most nonchalant look imaginable, I asked: «Where's the daughter of old man Dondi living now?» Augusta didn't know. After her marriage to some foreigner she had never returned to Trieste.

And then I visualized the poor Dondi girl, still in ankle-length skirts, pottering about in some corner of the world; unknown—that is, living among people who had never known her when she was little. I was touched by this picture, for it had been my own fate. Although I had never gone anywhere.

Augusta is the only person who claims to be able to remember me exactly as I was, with all of my youthful virtues, and some failings, the most outstanding of which was my fear of growing old; this was something for which she has not forgiven me yet, although she now appreciates how well founded my fear was. But I doubt really if she remembers. Apart from what I actually see, I myself do not remember much about her. What is more, she knew only a part of my youth; I mean, she knew it only very superficially. I, for instance, can remember my own youthful vicissitudes better than I can remember the way she looked and felt. On certain unexpected occasions my youth seems to return to me, and whenever it does I must hurry to the looking glass to find out where in time I really belong. Then, that I may return to my proper place, I look under my chin at the wrinkles twisting through the pendulous growth of skin there.

I once spoke to my nephew Carlo about these illusions of youth that from time to time possess me. Carlo is a doctor, and young as well, so he knows something of age. With a mischievous smile, he told me that they were unquestionably symptoms of old age, as I had completely forgotten how one feels to be young and was obliged to study the skin on my neck in order to recognize myself. Then, with a guffaw, he added:

«It's like old Signor Cralli next door. The man honestly thinks he's the father of the baby that young wife of his is about to give birth to.»

No, hardly this! I am still young enough not to make mistakes like that. Time is an element in which I am not able to move with absolute sureness. But I am convinced that it cannot be my fault entirely, though I dare not tell Carlo who, not understanding what I meant, would only ridicule me. Time wreaks its havoc with a firm, cruel hand; then it marches off in an always orderly procession of days, months, and years, but when it has long since passed and is out of sight, it breaks ranks. All of which accounts for the fact that, when recalled, some years strike one as being nothing but summer and sun, and others seem riddled with chillness. And chill and cheerless is the year when one can remember absolutely nothing about the rightful place of anything: three hundred and sixty-five twenty-four-hour days, each dead, vanished. What a hecatomb!

Sometimes upon those dead years a sudden light is cast that illuminates a particular episode, and one may then discover a rare and intensely fragrant flower in one's life. Thus, never before had I felt Signorina Dondi so close to me as that day in Piazza Goldoni. Before, in that little garden—how many years ago could it have been?—I had paid hardly any attention to her, and young, I had passed her by without ever noticing her grace, her innocence. Now, no sooner had I rejoined her than others, seeing us together, began to laugh. Why had I not seen her, noticed her before? In the present, perhaps, all happenings are obscured by our preoccupation with the period that is upon us. But don't we ever see it, don't we ever feel it except when we are far removed from it, except when we are safe?

Here in my little room, however, I am able to arrive at such safety: by concentrating with these sheets of paper in front of me, I can examine and analyze the present in its own inimitable light; I am able to reach that part of the past which has not yet vanished.

So I shall describe the present and that part of the past which has not yet vanished; and not to preserve my memory of it, rather to collect myself. If I had always done this, I would have been less surprised, less upset, by the encounter in Piazza Goldoni. I would not have looked at the girl simply like one whose sight has been preserved by the good Lord.—From head to toe.

I do not feel old, but I have a feeling that I am rusty. I am obliged to think and write in order to feel alive, because the life I lead, between the many virtues I possess and those which are attributed to me, and my many feelings of affection, my many duties, which bind and paralyze me, deprives me of all freedom. I am living with the same inertia with which one dies. And I am anxious to pull myself together, to snap out of it. Doing so might result in my becoming more virtuous and affectionate. Passionately virtuous perhaps, but it will be a virtue all my own and not one that is forced on me by others, because such garb oppresses rather than clothes me. I shall either quit wearing those outfits or tailor them to fit me.

Writing, therefore, which I shall look forward to doing every evening shortly before taking my physic, is to serve a hygienic purpose. And it is my hope that these sheets of mine will contain even things I do not normally say aloud, for only in that way can the treatment be successful.

Once before I wrote with this same idea in mind—that is, of being sincere; then, too, hygiene figured in it as my writing was intended to prepare me for psychoanalytical treatment. The treatment failed, but the sheets remain. And how precious they are! I seem not to have lived, apart from those periods in my life which I described. I reread them yesterday. Unfortunately I did not find mention of Signorina Dondi (Emma?—yes, Emma), but I came across numerous other things. Including an important event which is not entered, but which comes to mind from the empty space in which it clearly belongs. I would record it at once had I not forgotten it. But it is not lost, because by reading those pages again I shall certainly find it. They are here, those sheets, right at hand, protected from all manner of confusion. There time is crystallized and may be located if one is capable of opening to the correct page. Like a railway timetable.

Naturally, everything I set down I did, but rereading it, it appears more important than my life itself, which I seem to remember as having been long and uneventful. Of course, when one writes about life, it is made out to be a more serious affair than it actually is. Life itself is a dilution which is obfuscated by the many things which, while describing it, are never mentioned. One does not mention breathing until one's breath is short, nor one's many vacations, meals, sleep, until some tragedy leaves one wanting for them. In reality, however, they occur with pendulum-like regularity side by side with a variety of other such activities, arrogantly presiding over so large a portion of our day that there is no place left for undue shedding of tears or laughter. In fact, it is for this reason that the accounts of lives—a considerable part of which is omitted: that which everyone experiences but no one ever mentions—result in being more intense than the lives themselves.

In other words, when recounted, life is idealized. And now, trembling as though entering into the presence of something sacred, I am preparing to undertake it a second time. Closely examining the present, I cannot say how I shall go about locating wisps of youth which my weary legs refuse to let me pursue and which I seek to evoke because it does, youth does return to me. Indeed, in these few lines I have written I have dimly made it out: it penetrated me in such a way as finally to lessen the weariness of old age running through my veins.

There is, however, a vast difference between my frame of mind now and the last time I described my life. I mean, my situation simplified itself. I continue still to struggle between the present and past; but at least hope—anxious hope for the future—is not trapped in between. I go on living in jumbled times. This is man's fate, whose grammar has pure tenses seemingly designed for lower animals, which live joyously, when not frightened, in a crystal-clear present. But for an old man (yes, I am an old man: this is the first time I admit it, and it is the first conquest I owe to this new undertaking of concentration), an amputation, whereby life is deprived of a limb it never had—the future—makes life simpler, but also so senseless that one might as well employ the brief present in tearing out the scattered strands of hair still remaining on one's deformed pate.

But I, on the contrary, persist in occupying myself otherwise during the present; and if, as is my hope, there be room for the resumption of activity, I shall have provided evidence that the present is longer than it seems. Measuring it is difficult, and the mathematician who would try merely errs, merely proves that it is not within his purview. I at least, I think, know how one should approach measuring it. When our memory is able to eliminate from a given occurrence all that might result in surprise, fright, and confusion, one may then say that that occurrence has been translated into the past.

I have pondered this problem for so long that even my own inactive life has given rise to an experience that may settle the matter if others wish to repeat it with more precise instruments; that is, by substituting a man better trained in making exact records than I am.

One day last spring Augusta and I mustered courage enough to go for a drive out beyond Udine, where we lunched in a well-known eating house that still practices the slow, unerring art of the spit. Afterward, we drove on a little farther, in the direction of Carnia, so as to have a closer look at the great mountains. In a short while we were overcome by that weariness of old folks which arises when they find themselves to be particularly comfortable. We got out of the car and, feeling a strong need to stretch our legs, climbed the low wooded hill that rose alongside the highway. On the top we were rewarded by a surprise. We were unable to see the road or the fields at the foot of the hill we had climbed: only innumerable, gentle green foothills, cutting off our view of all but the gigantic mountains near by, and their blue-rock peaks regarding us with great solemnity. We had succeeded in bringing about a change in the surrounding countryside more quickly on foot than by motorcar, and I breathed a deep sigh of relief: a joy I have never forgotten. Was my joy due to surprise or to the balsam-scented air free of the highway dust, or to our sense of being utterly alone? Whatever, joy made me feel adventurous and while on the hilltop I even decided to attempt the other side, opposite the road from which we had come. It was easy: there was a footpath beaten through the tall grass. There, at the bottom of the hill, I was able to make out a cottage with a man standing in front of it, who, with vigorous swings of a hammer over an anvil, was bending a piece of iron. And like a child, I marvelled at how the metallic sound reached my ears long after the hammer had been raised to strike again. I am a real child, but Mother Nature is very childish herself, creating such contrasts between light and sound.

I remembered for a long time the pleasure afforded by the colors and the solitude and the clash between eye and ear. Then the serious side of memory intruded, my mind's logic bringing order to the confusion in nature; so that now, whenever I think back to that hammer, I hear it resound instantly it strikes the anvil. At the same time, to be sure, something has gone awry in the scene. The disorder of the present has been substituted by the disorder of the past. That cluster of hills has become even more numerous and wooded. Also, the peaks of the mountains have grown darker, more serious, perhaps even closer than they actually were, but everything is well ordered and harmonious. Unfortunately I did not take note of how many days that present required for such a transformation. But even if I had, I should not have been able to say more than this: «In the mind of septuagenarian Zeno Cosini things mature in a certain number of hours and minutes.» How many other experiments ought to have been performed on greatly differing individuals with all of their differing ages in order finally to formulate the general law that would establish the frontier between the present and the past?

And so I shall close my life like my late father, with a notebook in my hand. How I used to laugh at that book of his! Actually, I smile even now when I think of it, recalling that its intended use was for the future. He jotted down things he had to attend to, dates for periodic visits, and and so on. I still have one of his notebooks. Many of the entries start with a reminder: Don't forget such-and-such a thing on such-and-such a date. He had confidence in the efficacy of the reminders buried in that notebook of his. But I have proof that his confidence was illplaced. I found one note that read: «I absolutely (and this word he underscored) must not forget to tell Olivi when the occasion presents itself that, upon my death, my son must be made to seem the real director in the eyes of everyone—though he'll never be it.»

It must be supposed, then, that the occasion to speak with Olivi never presented itself. Anyway, all effort to transfer oneself from one time to another is futile, and it takes a naïveté like my father's to believe that one may direct one's own future. Perhaps, as the philosophers assert, time does not exist. Certainly, however, the containers that hold it do, and they are practically air-tight; no more than a few drops trickle from one into the other.

I should like to look around a little more so that I may terminate this memorable day by passing on to tomorrow this hour I have spent writing. About my study, a cozy and attractive room which has been, to my great perturbation, refurbished by Augusta several times through the years, though without even introducing anything new, I have little to say. It is pretty much the same as it was shortly after our marriage, and I have already described it elsewhere. For a short while now there has been a thoroughly distressing innovation. In the last few days my violin and even my reading have been neglected. It's my gramophone that's to blame: it simply appropriated the space needed to amplify its sturdier voice. I bought it a year ago. It cost a good deal, like the records, which are not only expensive but which I am constantly buying. I do not regret the expense, but I should have liked to leave my violin in its place. Though I have not touched it in years. In my hands it had become something more than a-rhythmic—even wobbly—and there seemed to be a slight deterioration of tone. For all that, I enjoyed seeing it there, in its place, awaiting better times. Augusta, however, was not able to understand why I left it to clutter up my room, and impelled by her mania for order, it resulted one day in her removing it, assuring me that if I asked for it I could have it back at once. Doubtless, I shall never ask her, but there is no doubt as to whether, if she had left it where it was, I might not have picked it up again. The decision required now is of an entirely different order. I have to begin by begging Augusta to bring it back, and playing it no sooner than I have it. But I cannot assume such long-term engagements. And for that reason, here I am, permanently severed from another part of my youth. Augusta has not yet learned how many things must be taken into account when dealing with an old man.

And there would not be other changes in the room even if, just now, it were not filled with certain sounds having nothing to do with my record player. Twice a week (never on Sundays, but on Mondays and Saturdays) a drunken melomane wends his way up the sloping path that runs alongside our villa. He rather annoyed me in the beginning, later I laughed at him, and finally I came to like him. Small, slender but not stooped, his mouth turned heavenward, I used often to watch him from my window after I had switched off all the lights in the room; I could make him out on the white, moonlit path. He walks slowly, not because the climb is difficult, but to be able to devote his full breath to holding the notes with fervor. And sometimes, coming to notes he falters before, because they strike him as being exceptionally difficult, he even stops walking altogether. I hear the utter innocence of that singer even in the fact that his song is invariably the same. Far be it from him to consider improvising! He has a few appoggiaturas that flatter the right notes, but he cannot help it: they make the notes easier for him to reach. Perhaps, not aware of having altered the music, he now loves it the way he must sing it. He is lacking in ambition and, therefore, malice. So, if one night I were to meet him on the path, cognizant of his lofty, selfless humaneness, I should not be frightened; instead I would go up to him and ask if I might join in singing with him. He always sings *Un ballo in maschera*. He would be greatly astonished if a policeman were to ask him to keep quiet. Singing *Alzati! la tua figlia a te concedo rivedere. Nell'ombra e nel silenzio là*... he is speaking to Amelia herself.

Behind that singing of his, naturally, there is a great deal of wine, but wine has never occupied a more noble office. My minstrel *inhabits* that ancient story. Reborn for him twice a week, it surprises and moves him like something new. How is it that on all other evenings he abstains from wine, which provokes in him such bliss? What an example of moderation!

My chauffeur Fortunato knows him. He says that he's a carpenter who lives up above us in a simple little cottage. He is married; he is not yet forty but has a son who is twenty. Which is why he thinks of himself as old and harks back to a past even more remote than the one I seek. What morality there is in him! I need the thumping seventy years I have just to break away from the present. And still I am not content, trying to pin it to these sheets at this very moment.

I shall never attempt to make his acquaintance. That feeble voice of his seems to issue from bygone times. It moves me. And being a lament, there is the confusion that makes for an adventure in itself. That lonely voice and I here at my table analyzing its pauses, its moments of fervor—perfect order! The coming hours will not be able to alter that voice for me. The next time I hear it, I am going to glance at these notes of mine to see if that new present will be capable of correcting my memory of it, proving me wrong.

I am tired, this evening, of writing. Augusta, who called to me from the passage a short while ago, will be asleep by now in her neatly made bed, her head bound under the chin with a strip of lace netting which she tolerates in order to train her close-coiffed white hair.—Something that is tight and such a bother that it would keep *me* from sleeping.

Her sleep is still light, but noisier than in the past. Especially her first breaths, in the first moments of abandon. It is very much as though suddenly other organs, unprepared for such duty, have been summoned to direct her respiration and, unexpectedly awakened, begin to rumble. Ours is an awful machine when it is old! Whenever I witness Augusta's effort, in dread of what I shall have to go through myself, I can never get to sleep without a double dose of a sleeping draught. It is well, therefore, that I do not go to bed until Augusta is already asleep. I disturb her a little, but afterward she sleeps more quietly.

And here, emulating my father, I shall jot down a reminder: Remember not to complain too much about old age in these notes. You'll only aggravate your situation.

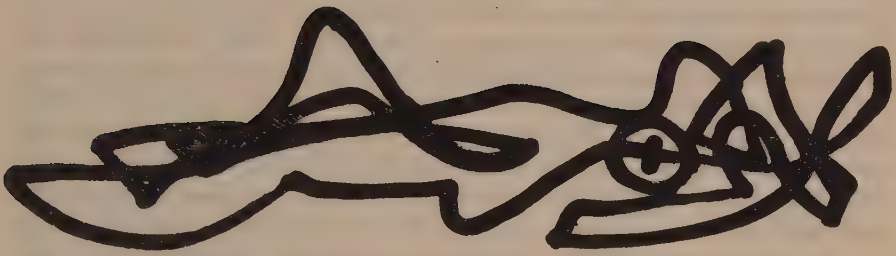
But it is going to be difficult, not mentioning it. Less naïf than was my father, I know straightaway that this is a useless reminder. Old all day long, without a moment's respite! And aging by the second! I strained to get used to being as I am today, and tomorrow I shall have to undergo the same strain in order to reseat myself in this chair which has become more uncomfortable than ever. Who dares to deprive me of my right to speak, to shout, to protest? All the more since protest is the shortest route to resignation.

(translated from the Italian by **Ben Johnson**)

Note: On 16 May 1928, Italo Svevo wrote to Benjamin Crémieux : « ...after several not particularly good weeks I now feel so well that, with sudden resolve, I have begun a new novel, *Il Veccchione*, a continuation of my *Zeno*. I have done twenty pages of it and am having a world of fun. It won't matter if I am not able to finish it. At least, once more in life, I shall have enjoyed a hearty laugh... » Four months later, on 13 September, Italo Svevo was dead at Motta di Livenza from injuries sustained in an automobile accident. The pages here presented are the twenty to which he referred.—*Translator.*

from **faraday slaughter**

patrick bowles



AND the next fellow to quicken her little landscape was Faraday J. Slaughter, Esquire, a quickly lay quickly go fellow with heavying features and a long bland tongue. And he blandished her with his blarney more than once and to such effect that she laid her purse and body down for him before him, he didn't find it necessary to come a-wooing, nor, no, a-marrying, his lying talk was enough, for a night, and he lied for a night and he laid her. Often and often after and during the night's misery and gossip and the day's horrible light she was lied to and laid, coaxed and wheedled times all too numerous off her natural posture and condition, from standing virgin to lying whore and from this to a whore upright again, though her virgin days were over and the gentle breeze of anticipation blew no more, the storms of lechery began their howling incessantly round her, gone the gentle breezes, murmuring no longer virgin sorrows, the wooer's voice no longer sweet, passed the gay dawn, come the foul day, to come the foul night. So off they bucked leaving procreation in their train unsleeping and the winds blew, one of the cons against creation, how the fiend lay atop of her roared, in his tupping and topping, inning and outing, fastening his fingerplay on her, quickening his roists, slipping and whipping, no f..king etceteras about it and she left no flies on him for her part. Receive thee my soul blurted Faraday securing her with his pinion. This was the beginning of a harder winter than she had imagined, no insurance to save her his loss and the bill was a stiffer one than her tiny finances could bear, and the agony of the seasons, and the hours of dying, and the waning moons, and the waxing heats, and the softening snows, tumbling, tumbling over the house where she was laid. Her old familiars had abandoned her then, she was not one to keep her canaries, all her dogs had gone for a walk and she had no cats left to stroke, alone with Faraday for as long as he would stay, for Faraday was a great traveller when his convenience moved him, his impulses paved his good intentions as obediently as possible, he didn't let his expectations grow cold, his hopes weren't lit in the dark. All her friends knew good old Faraday for a touch and they touched him cordially even if they didn't stand too long in the caverns of his understanding.

And that's how Faraday hit town, right down on his uppers, bare in his breeches and in his shirt, and his dirty jacket, without any soap, any razor, any money, any prospects in his pocket, all the good things of life had never been worse for him, never been worse. Poor old Faraday fell into town and collapsed into oblivion and his body was getting on beginning its dead end when someone turned him over and his face turned up half dead in their memory. They put one hand under his ribs and gripped his arm with another and Faraday stumbled over his legs and rose again. Why old Faraday! they cried, what sort of a fellow have you been making yourself, here! here! what a time and place to be drinking in the gutter, to be sure, even though Faraday's melting mood was far from ironies, his pulse was not at its quickest. Nevertheless all the more persuasion was effective in assisting Faraday to a standstill and he stood stock still for a fair second and lurched, scaling the pavement in their embrace, thanking them only speechlessly as yet with his hollow eyes for their appreciation. Looking about him Faraday fixed on their substance in front of the grey brick wall and penetrating their plurality discerned their identity out of his memory, though not their name, reflectively saying, That is who it is, and then remembering after a fashion of his, It is Gavin, for some reason, I suppose. Well, wanderlust always prevailed over his patriotism and Faraday noticing himself no longer prostrate put one of his best feet painfully forward and began to be led as good Gavin's good arm moved him, and up they struck, and stepped out raggedly, and stopped, and stepped off, and were launched, the crowd cheering to the best of its singularity. Faraday soon found Gavin colourfully clothed. For his arm was Bottle-green. For his chest was white, triangular. For his swelling cravat was red, triangular. Trousers? Vide Infra. Shoes? Vide Infra. His Vide Infra, an ordinary brown. Faraday seeing, in a manner of seeing, By Eye's Tuition! A crisply crinkling high quality bottle-green (Common and going) arm was interlinking his filthy smelly revolting old muck-laden jacket, holey, holey, Faraday my almighty! its propaedeutic nondescription of a hue had prefaced its offensive neutrality ever so long familiar. That man next to Faraday, a spotted hanky was cleverly disposed in his little top pocket. He affected a gay feather in his trilby too. To Faraday the feather was visible dimly as gay. He detested feathers. Faraday's changes constantly overtook him, his personality, no, or his character, no, and his character, yes, for the thing in being, although he did not refer to them as such, shockingly unstable, flying to betray him, he could never say I in favour of himself, some I's were always falling, others always rising, some in him strengthening, some fading, things were never the same two differences running together. This is because Faraday's memories were all out of joint simultaneously. This memory (we tell it as it happens) (is that man intimidated? Yes!) is of one intimidated by the splendour of his old acquaintance. By the waters in Faraday it gave up its blood. At his bulging temple a kerchief was employed stanching a superficial wound. Saving another day for his soul, stumbling his groins over the sidewalk, discorded in their limbs, they led each other off beside the legs of Gavin even-hinged and correlated. Some passers-by accompanied their meeting with scraps of orange-peel and other pejorative confettis. His nether limbs couldn't accord him his desires and he took to his feet still under the circumstances, only gradually diminishing. First he staggered then he faltered then he staggered, then Gavin stooped to bear him, when they arrived, Faraday making of the door his goal and destination, widening his eyes, deepening his breathing, steadying his knees and ankles, flaking right out into a vision of coloured stars and flashes, as he picked up his feet, and put them on the carpet, and took them to the sofa, in front of the fire, where darkness overswayed him midst a welter of stars.

Fewer than ever nowadays were the days out of which Faraday was prepared or able to take an early rise, his leaning in that direction had fallen far away into the disuse of any morning he did not see, according to the hazard of his habits, from behind, the morning sun for him had never or seldom been very much less than a burning late night final, in sleep his days were passed unplanned, the only programmes he could draw were records of a past mistimed. His futures were always far worse spent than he allowed for. His presents, intensive and sustained anxiety, that the past live unrevived. Most of his temporality was upset, in some time or another. With resignation he remembered. With pain he thought. With fear he surmised. All these mistakes he considered subject to correction. All his corrections he considered subject to mistakes. All his among other things long angry life he felt himself the particular victim of error, in itself inexplicable, in its relation to him transparently natural. But he was resigned to his mistakes as he recalled them and nightly eagerly began another, daily as a broken rule of thumb exhaustedly revised the renovated list, adjusting here another savagery, here another barbarism, now another folly, there another failure, in resignation pain or fear according to his purpose.

This disorderly incarnation of his drunken purpose is aware of itself, in its primary stations, in the form of a memory, the memory accepted painfully in the form of an explosion, from this moment stemming countless traces in the supercession of events, as far as can be seen, on Faraday at his mental milestones.

The explosion expounded adjoins Faraday's first personal acquaintance with murder, in the human sense, of any kind. He committed it willingly and wilfully, his outburst a consequent spur of premeditation and intent, pricking him on to the killing.

The spur of the killing set him out on a brief journey to the railway station, signalling the outset of his longer travels, mostly by himself alone from city to city, country to country, year to year and often more often than this, in diverse ways, by many means. From then on he went far, fear in his publicity at times yet no compunction in his solitude, a calm one, whenever he could think, a thing he had not by any means always the power to do. This absence of scruple, for he was an unparalleled self-compurgator, was only partly due to the circumstances of the killing, and to its subject, viz. an indignant gentleman of French origin, less sensible than his long-thighed daughter Minette Beguin to the more and the less evident attractions of Faraday. Faraday's lack of hesitation was undaunted by in particular two facts he recognized, the virtually total senility and the plurality of chronic diseases racking Mr. Beguin, who resisted ineffectually, and then, aided by threats of blackmail and offers of violence by proxy, more successfully, and ultimately less successfully Faraday's ever more frequent inroads on Minette, until his sudden by no means premature death at the outraged hand of Faraday.

Some of his regrets came away with him, others he left in a city several hungering months had seen him all unwittingly fostered by, though his heyday for hunger was not in this city, not in these events, not yet, his high tide for those waters followed him far worse elsewhere, in the most likely places tenaciously tracking him down, in lesser isolations recurrently ferreting him out, reminding him inescapably of his condition, among other disasters. His breadline no measured course of malnutrition but a progress of sporadic climbs and plummeting between heavenly starvation and gluttonous excess. But he had no more then than an intuition, concerning the possibility of this law, and its application to himself, in that city.

Of the regrets he left in his train, one prominent was for the several flowers of womanhood, some blossoming, some faded, others withered beyond belief, and others yet still but tender buds, in whose rose he had sharpened his thorn, and would in all likelihood sharpen it no more. Less prominent was that for the fair weather, the murder having occurred in midsummer, at the height of the tourist season, less, for he could not hope it had gone for ever.

Of the apprehensions, prominent was his concern for the feelings of the police, and their activity, lest they should happen upon the body of Mr. Beguin, over which the river at the end of the town now murmured his lyke-wake, inside his tin box, and lest it should be recognizable, although in this direction he had taken careful precautions.

Most of his regrets Faraday shrugged away, noticing them only or mostly as fragments of an incommunicable past, when he troubled to notice them, but as to his apprehensions, they could not be dispensed with, in spite of his will, now they were one of his inward attributes, tightening his silences, lessening his dispensations, quickening his deeds.

For Faraday from fear at first could not cry out his thoughts in speech, or rarely cried them out, or even body forth his mind in any form. And if he represented them to himself at all at times, it was frequently in horror, speechlessly. It was the past half more than all else of his present he thought unspeakable. Beyond these doings others lay detestable, and these he neither spoke nor thought, these were done in the course of silence, which a speech could never deny, or a thought, these were those of his worst.

Thus grimly and firmly he did Mr. Beguin to his death, and disfigured his face, and dropped his body in the river, in the night, and lit out, with his daughter. This was a torture he made his memory, early, elementary, and if unspeakable not unthinkable, and the thought of it recurred, as faith in a better past dwindled. Other tortures, later, advanced, involved, recurred and he wished them unthinkable, although they were not.

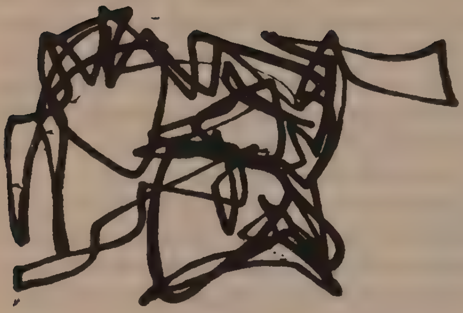
Faraday not long afterwards descended into appearances, fostering his brighter humour, transitory, ill-founded, a masque for the outer world. It was in this guise he dismounted his train, abjuring his welcome to the sound of a bell, turning and turning in his silence, thundering in his nightmares, swearing at his heavens like a swallow. And here was another country threatening him with its pastures, the sepulchral city of Mr. Beguin becoming no less than a memory in his half-demented brain, in the estimations of the undemented.

poem

guy daniels

My daughter's learning history on TV.
She says: «Once, long ago, the Germans had
A leader who was very, very bad.
The people in Japan did, too. So we
Had a big war. We won. And in the end
The Japs and Germans got democracy.
But that was long ago. Now they're our friends:
And our side's going to win again—you'll see.»

portrait



w. j. redding

The portrait hangs in Dijon,
the face dark and heavy, deep in the frame,
the figure is broad-backed, desperate, tall:
it is the hands that are unexpected—
outspread, air shining between the fingers;
the dark eyes, intense above the outstretched hands
regard the fingers in turgid fear:
you would say the eyes were watching for their death.

Living, the blood would rise in its veins,
swell the fingers to clench like paired snakes, turn,
recoil, and draw back to the buried heart
writhing in fury like a madman's head
raging at fantastic shades of the sea.
And his days passed in fear of the fear
that it would rise and murder him in sleep,
and tear his body on its splintered bones.
But he feared no death from other hands,
with no thought of cords or poison at home,
keeping no guard by him between the wars;
but it was pretence to master that blood—
and he lay chained in the tides of dread,
as it flowed and ebbed deep within.

And at the time he fell ill from fever,
with Granson lost and great numbers of dead,

he lay mute, with fear eager in his eyes,
watching for the dark fall and return
that would meet and rise in the crest of his death.

He kept himself withdrawn, locked in despair,
with great sapphires and diamonds piled by,
and tall palanquins laced with cords of gold,
pictures in stone, and twelve dark apostles,
ranked by the black and towering Spanish cross,
with four hundred tents there for his train,
and these kept by him for the sake of fear,
to force his blood's consent that he was lord,
with no power, man, or thing beyond him,
but the blood would not be subject, nor believe,
and lay in wait, with death deep in its tide.

And when the twin horns of Uni betrayed him
his blood knew that it lived in lost flesh
and would escape at last.
The day the battle waged north beyond Nancy,
and the prince of Lothringia rode back
through the town in torn, deserted streets,
charged with defeat and searching for the king,
none had seen him, and messengers went forth,
while the prince watched by the windows,
recognizing none among the carts of dead,
or the wounded carried in on litters,
and none among the thin hostage-lines.

In the morning the search was carried on,
the party went out shivering in the cold,
the air stiff after the deep night frosts,
grey snow crunched and gnashed beneath their feet;
the king's fool ran before, aping the dogs,
and when he spied a distant corpse, leapt off,
bent over it and muttered softly,
urging it to pull itself together
and be the man they sought, gave it time
for thought, then threatened, and shook the corpse in rage,
angered at the stubborn sloth of the dead.

And they sought on without an end in sight,
the town faroff, hidden in falling clouds,
lost in a flat, indifferent country,
with hard going among the frozen rocks—
an old woman stumbled at their heels,

shaking her head in a hard, mumbled prayer.
In front, the leader suddenly stopped dead,
looked round him, and spoke some words to the leech,
pointed to the near line of sky, then struck off
in the pall. They reached a frozen marshline,
and found some dozen dead there in the ice,
spoiled and stripped, and gnawed by the winter beasts;
they recognized the priest, Olivier,
bearing toothmarks that had scarred his throat—
and the old woman knelt by in the snow,
whimpering at his cross of frozen hands,
reaching their stiff and bloodless fingers out.
Some of them tried to raise the nearest corpse,
but the face was heavy and deep in the marsh,
arms outstretched, ice shining above the hands,
and they forced the body from the broken rocks:
the brittle, frozen flesh, torn and tearing,
bared his eyes, black, and glassed in the blood of death.
They crossed themselves in fear, and looked back,
expecting the Romans there at their heels,
but only the fool, out of his head,
ran towards them, raging in fury:
he had found his horse nearby, dead,
with its broken legs piercing the ice,
the nails, thrust out from its shattered feet,
and the king's iron spurs cut deep in its side.
And they turned silently back to the corpse,
seeking for marks to prove it was the king;
the fool swore after them in anger
while they laid bare the faults of the dead.
They found the birth traces and old scars,
and gathered the scarce sticks amongst the rocks,
to kindle fires to wash the naked corpse
in the little water and wine they had.
Then held watch by his body through the night,
with the corpse of the king wrapped in his cloak,
and no light beyond their circled fires.
They turned back toward the town when day came,
and on that day the king was laid in state,
with thin shrouds stretched over the empty flesh:
the fool sadly folding the great mantle
in the unlit room—grey light reflected
on the haggard, bloodless face, crossed
the torn head under the dark coronet,
and bared the pale skull to the winter day,
watching its death through dead and hollowed eyes.

words and war

(contd from page 143)

> «There are critics who confuse aesthetic values with philosophic values, especially with those laid down by philosophic moralists. T.S. Eliot, for example, says that ***the truest philosophy is the best material for the greatest poet***, and implies that what the poet does is to make philosophic content more viable by addition of sensuous and emotional qualities. Just what the ***truest philosophy*** is, is a matter of some dispute. But the critics of this school do not lack definite, not to say dogmatic, convictions on this point. Without any particular competency in philosophic thought, they are ready to pronounce ***ex-cathedra*** judgments, because they are committed to some conception of the relation of man to the universe that flourished in some past epoch.»
>
> John Dewey, *Art and Experience*, 1934.

Absolutism, the systematic passion, seems to be excited by the subjective perception of chaos in «the moral world» and from a fear of the growing complexity of the universe of modern science which, in its method, posits the relativity of truth and threatens the so-called «ultimate truths». These «ultimate truths», it is felt, and deeply felt, are all that stand between civilisation and barbarism. The present state of the world is held up as supposed justification for the view that we have had too much science, too much relativism during the past three centuries. If man once surrenders his notions of Absolute Good and Evil, of Right and Wrong, it is argued, the resulting conflict of personal ambitions, of individuals, of states, will certainly destroy the last remnants of our civilisation. Thus, it is high time we check the absurd presumptions of modern science and reaffirm our faith in the Absolutes of the Christian religion, more particularly in those of Orthodoxy, in those of Catholicism, since most of the unorthodox brands are more or less infected with the virus of anthropocentrism, scientism, liberalism, humanism.

In the cultural sphere the disease manifested itself in the 17th century, in the phenomenon which, after Mr. Eliot, has come to be known as the «dissociation of sensibility». This spiritual malady, it is sometimes suggested, received its first systematic diagnosis in T.E. Hulme's *Speculations*, published shortly after the First World War.

The fact that you cannot call a halt to science,—since science is merely the historical evolution of the experimental attitude, an attitude older and more fundamental than any religious attitude[1]—the fact that since the 17th century the proponents of Orthodoxy have naturally and necessarily suffered defeat after defeat at the hands of their scientific opponents, has led at last in our time, if not always to an attack on science itself, at least to a concerted and bitter drive against the operation of its method in the so-called «realms» of religion and art and against social and cultural theories which are the natural outcome of the scientific attitude.

The analogical use of scientific vocabulary in areas which have not been subjected to strict, scientific study is a most risky and fallacious procedure. Absolutists have been quick to point this out. On the other hand, they have themselves, wherever it has suited their purposes, been among the worst offenders. For example, the current strategem is to use the Heisenberg principle of uncertainty to «verify» their metaphysical tenet that «the ultimate nature of the universe» is beyond the reach of «deterministic science».

We think that it can be said that the reaction against «scientism»—the instigators of it are not in the least abashed to use the term «reactionary» of themselves—has been gaining ground since 1920. In aesthetic critical theory it has led to a glamourising of Mediaeval and to a deprecation of Renaissance culture.

The type of absolutist theory we refer to is that which contains statements like the following:

> « the whole of modern literature is corrupted by what I call Secularism... it is simply unaware of, simply cannot understand the meaning of the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life...»
>
> T.S. Eliot, «Religion and Literature»,

or,

> «The point of view of this essay... is influenced by the late, neglected[2] T.E. Hulme... It is the belief, philosophically tenable, in a radical discontinuity between the physical and the spiritual realms.»
>
> Allen Tate, «On the Limits of Poetry»,

or,

> «Our modest capacity for true understanding is frustrated. For the true rationale of the humanistic study is now what it has always been, even though now it is not only in decay, but dead. I allude to the arts of rhetoric.
>
> «By rhetoric I mean the study and the use of the figurative language of experience as the discipline by means of which men govern their relations with one another in the light of truth.»
>
> Allen Tate, «Is Literary Criticism Possible?»

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[1] We do not intend to deny that before man used technical terms he used metaphor, that the power to abstract verbally came relatively late in human development: what we are affirming is that as soon as the senses take up their functions, there is comparison of sense-contents, verification: this is the beginning of science.

[2] We fail to understand why T.E. Hulme is again and again and again referred to as «neglected».

or, a demand for the scientific restatement of a theological belief

> «does not necessarily imply the 'falsehood' of the older statement; it may merely mean that men now wish to live and to act according to a different formula. This is especially evident in our period (17th century) whenever a 'scientific' explanation replaces a theological one. For example, the spots on the moon's surface might be due, theologically, to the fact that it was God's will that they should be there; scientifically they might be 'explained' as the craters of extinct volcanoes. The newer explanation may be said, not so much to contain 'more' truth than the older, as to supply the *kind* of truth which was now demanded.»
>
> Basil Willey, *The Seventeenth Century Background,*
> quoted by Kathleen Nott in *The Emperor's Clothes.*

or, and not necessarily finally,

> «Culture, which is the study of perfection and the constant effort to achieve it, is superior to the scientific spirit because it includes and passes beyond it.»
>
> Allen Tate, *Reason in Madness.*

Let us, before proceeding, examine this last statement, for it has the advantage of being short as well as typical. Mr. Tate is, of course, paraphrasing a view of Arnold's, but most of his own are not less engagingly tautological. What is true in the above statement is true by definition, i.e. the class of things designated by the word «culture» includes among other things the class of things designated by the word «science» (or, if he insists, «scientific spirit»). The obvious force of the statement rests on the facile impact of the analytic proposition: the whole is greater than the part—so far, no factual content; Mr. Tate has merely enunciated a linguistic rule governing the usage of two words. But, unfortunately, that is not all. What is by definition a more inclusive class name has somehow, in Mr. Tate's persuasive rhetoric, become simply «superior». A value judgment has been—perpetrated, we feel, would not be an unjust way of putting it. Like the beast of the Cyclops, to whose belly Ulysses was slung, Mr. Tate's innocent tautology carries a considerable load. Many readers, whose daily intellectual fare consists simply in a plethora of such loaded tautologies, doubtless the same readers who feel lost in the face of, if not hostile to, science, have probably been «convinced» by this specious argument without realising that they have been moved, or have had their attitude confirmed, not by a logical argument but by a psychological one. «As culture is superior to science,» our metaphysician might proceed, «and as the essence of culture is Art, that is to say, the pure visions or intuitions of our greatest spirits, the Dantes, the Shakespeares, the Goethes, Art is itself in some transcendental way higher, indeed truer than the mere abstractions of science. Art is the direct apprehension of Reality.» And so on, *ad infinitum*. Such statements, quite a-logical, but psychologically effective, are characterised by the incredible smoothness with which transitions are made from one universal to another and by the almost total absence of propositions that are empirically verifiable.

It is probably unnecessary to emphasise how far-reaching has been the influence of the critical theories of both Mr. Eliot and Mr. Tate in modern literature; since 1945, at least in America, fiction and poetry have been penetrated by their ideas. It is, on the other hand, imperative that the general public should realise where it is being led on this earnest and eucharistical march.

The basic assumption behind the theories of Mr. Eliot and Mr. Tate is that it is meaningful to speak of two kinds and, for these critics, levels of truth. The first kind of truth, usually referred to in scurrilous terms, is «scientific» truth; the second is referred to in various contexts as «spiritual» truth, or «theological» truth, or «imaginative» truth, or «poetic» truth, by which Mr. Tate means «quite simply knowledge[3]». This second kind of truth, these critics hold, is on a higher level than the propositions of science which are, after all, only a set of hieroglyphics symbolizing «the material aspect of things». The «high forms of literature offer us the only complete, and thus the most responsible versions of our experience,» asserts Mr. Tate[4].

We all know, it is argued, that the only «real» science is «exact science». In this way, the new, theological disposal-squads remove the detonators of what they refer to as the «so-called sciences», of sociology, of anthropology, and of psychology whose conclusions are «repellent», apart from their «dubious scientific credentials[5]». And. as they seem unable to grasp the point that *the most important thing about science is not a set of tabulated results but its method of verification* —it is the only known method of verification for any factual assertion— they hastily consign «exact science» to its «specialised field» in order to leave the more important aspects of the world open to their purely deductive, metaphysical, confessedly dogmatic, and quite unverifiable speculations. That is to say, man's mind, man's sin, man's spirit are reserved for theology, while man's body—the typist whose «drying combinations» are «touched by the sun's last rays»—is willingly abandoned to the limited field of science. The task before us, according to these gentlemen, is «to gain perception of an order in life, by imposing an order upon it...»[6] This, according to Mr. Eliot, is the function of art. But let us be clear what is meant by «order». For the order Mr. Eliot seeks to impose is not founded on and modified by verifiable experience: it is absolute, metaphysical. And while the physicist may also be said to «impose» order on the flux of experience by describing it in terms of categories of his own making, those categories are not only verified constantly by experiment but always subject to revision; in a word, their «truth» is only probable, and no physicist claims otherwise. But the order (and its ghostly hierarchies) which Mr. Eliot and Mr. Tate apparently wish to impose, in order that we may «perceive» correctly, is stamped with a very different kind of humility. It is the disarmingly «simple truth», best suited to simple minds, best received on one's knees. The applied categories, moreover, are imputed to have «absolute validity». Matched against such an unerring way of knowledge, science is understandably found to be a very shabby discipline indeed. Were we to ask how we can set about verifying these absolute categories (God, Original Sin, and all the eschatological paraphernalia), we should immediately be guilty of the sacrilege of seeking to apply method or «positivistic» principles within the realm of the spirit. The fact is that if we ask the absolutist to produce another method of verification he falls back, in one language or another, upon the claim that he is blessed with immediate apprehension. It is precisely this claim that we require him to verify.

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[3] In another context («Is Literary Criticism Possible?») we find Mr. Tate blaming relativist critics for «avoiding the simple word truth, and begging the question».

[4] *Reason in Madness.*

[5] «Is Literary Criticism Possible?»

[6] T.S. Eliot, «Poetry and Drama». a lecture delivered at Harvard, November 11, 1950.

If Mr. Tate and Mr. Eliot have so little respect for the scientific method of verification, it is difficult to understand why they should profess to be so much more tolerant of the «exact sciences» than of the various human sciences, for what distinguishes the former from the latter if it is not the degree of probability of the conclusions? Or rather, their attitudes and apprehensions are not at all difficult to understand: our theologians have decided for reasons that are no doubt absolute that they are not going to have their God and their soul tampered with by sociologists or soiled by the spiritually unclean: the word *heresy* has a wide current use in literary criticism on both sides of the Atlantic. Hence Mr. Tate's reference to the heretics' method of «slippery analogy» and to their «dubious scientific credentials»; even relative assent to the findings of such heretics as psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists[7] is to be withheld. Even the physicist deals only in abstractions—at this point the mind's eye squints patronisingly across an undecipherable mass of mathematical symbolism—and his work, except in so far as it supplies us with an occasional atomic bomb, has no meaningful reference beyond his laboratory. And were it not for the fact that the physicist occasionally does put us in the way of some utilisable invention—Mr. Eliot was quick to note that we could justly use the atomic bomb for God against Russia[8]—Mr. Willey would perhaps not have felt called upon to admit that the scientific explanation of lunar spots was perhaps just as valid as the theological statement about them. In this context we might point out that the theological statement gives us no information whatsoever about the moon which is not contained by definition in his notion of «God», the fact that the lunar spots are by the will of God being something that we can deduce analytically from the definition of God; in other words, like most theological statements, the present one has *no* factual content. And this is precisely what differentiates the propositions of the scientist from the «propositions» of the theologian; the propositions of science are synthetic and amenable, theoretically at least, to experimental verification. If Mr. Willey's wit ever really leads him to suppose that the theological explanation is just as valid as the scientific, it is difficult to understand why he ever consults his doctor. He already knows the only true, or really polite answer: his bellyache is «by the will of God».

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[7] Anthropology, however, is sometimes useful to the poet who has the ability—as Mr. Eliot has—to convert the anthropologist's dud coinage into something which Mr. Tate would not hesitate to call «the simple truth».

[8] *Observer*, London, December 1947.

We have no doubt that the absolutists are secretly annoyed, just as we are exasperated, at their inability to produce any acceptable method of verification for their systems and the absolute categories and the theological «propositions» which express them. Each seems to have his own way, if not of ignoring, then of dodging the question. Mr. Tate, who, in his essay on Poe, «The Angelic Imagination», wrote: «When men find themselves cut off from reality they will frequently resort to magic rites to recover it...», is himself guilty of using what we might call the «undecipherable ritual method». The fantastic contradictions and ambiguities in sentences constructed by this method make those sentences so opaque that one is overawed by the near-impossibility of analysing them. The critic is, as it were, outflanked by the enormity of the linguistic offence. Consider the following:

> «The traditionist, who is also a modernist and inevitably a relativist in procedure, and, as I think, a more thorough skeptic than the Liberal, includes in his historic picture absolute beliefs as being implicit and emergent in experience at all times, and under certain conditions, explicit and realized.»[9]

There is a kind of ethereal drunkenness in the above use of language; that language, melted by nostalgia into nonsense, becomes a potent draught: there is no common ground between the sacrament and logic. We cannot meaningfully predicate relativity of any procedure which interprets the world in terms of absolutes. Here, and in the quotations which follow, Mr. Tate is indulging in his cherished art of «rhetoric», that «discipline by means of which men govern their relations with one another in the light of truth»:

> «Since the value of moral unity is a kind of *a priori* truth, the anti-traditionist, attempting to undermine his opponent's position, must question, not this truth, but the kind of medium that the traditionist

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[9] This and the quotations which follow are taken from *Reason in Madness*, New York, 1941, pp. 206 ff.

> sets up for its realization. For whether the unity itself is desirable or undesirable is an imperative of reference, as absolute as Pascal's wager; and to it we must submit all our experience.»

But is this kind of bland persiflage worth comment? It ignores the whole impact of modern thought, which has been precisely to call into question the validity of the *a priori synthetic* (i.e. the only logical certainties are tautologies, analytic propositions, and they can be logically certain only in virtue of the fact that they have no factual content). We feel the last twist of Mr. Tate's neo-Scholastic knife in the following. First, a straw man, the historian, is burned:

> «The historian, in effect, tells us that the moral unification of human purpose and material medium has never been achieved, and so never will be achieved; and that it is a delusion.»

Is it not obvious that no competent historian ever argued in that fashion? But Mr. Tate does not leave it there:

> «And he is right—if we allow him to deal, as he usually does, irresponsibly with his fictitious absolutes.»

The tables have now been eloquently turned: Scholastic philosophy with its absolutist categories is presently seen to be the «only true relativist» philosophy; David Hume, Lord Russell and Mr. Wittgenstein, with their tentative procedures, are now seen to be «really» absolutists.

M. Eliot, locking horns with this problem of absolutes that are not quite absolute, uses another tactic in his *After Strange Gods:*

> «I am not arguing or reasoning or engaging in controversy with those whose views are radically opposed to such as mine. In our time, controversy seems to me, on really fundamental matters, to be futile. It can only be usefully practised where there is common understanding. It requires common assumptions, and perhaps the assumptions that are felt are more important than those which can be formulated. We experience such profound differences with some of our contemporaries that the nearest parallel is the difference between the mentality of one epoch and another. In a society like ours, *wormeaten with Liberalism*, the only thing possible for a person with strong convictions, is to state a point of view and leave it at that.»

This is a strange position for an absolutist. Mr. Eliot asserts, on the one hand, that there are absolute truths and absolute values, and, on the other, that only he and his Orthodox friends can be expected to see them. If we read «common attitude» for common understanding, the position is that of a thoroughgoing relativist, for after the linguistic problems have been cleared away, there may very well remain fundamental differences in the attitudes of men, ranging through numberless gradations from one pole to another. These attitudes may exist, but the statements in which they express themselves will be neither true nor false. That is to say, a statement such as «aristocracy is a good thing» will tell us something of the speaker's attitude but nothing whatsoever about aristocracy[10]. What Mr. Eliot has done, in effect, is to admit this. We feel, therefore, that we are entitled to protest vehemently when in another context he writes, with the unction of a very righteous man, that education ought to be a matter of teaching men to think in Christian categories. It would seem to us clear that this is a completely totalitarian recommendation[11]. No doubt Christian categories are preferable, for example, to Nazi categories, to those categories in terms of which the a-scientific theory of race was developed in Nazi Germany, but we should never forget how many men have been burned in the past that Christian categories might be preserved, nor how, at the present time, those categories are being used by the Church to create a «Christian Europe» and to inspire a «holy alliance» against Russia and her satellites. In short, we can understand Mr. Eliot's opposition to Soviet Russia, but his «holy» opposition, rendered plausible by the prevailing ignorance of the logic of language, is in principle as mischievous as the speculations of the Nazi philosopher, Rosenberg.

The stubborn and constant defence of old categories is a kind of armour against new knowledge. It leads always to dogmatism, and necessarily. We agree with Arnold Toynbee that the imposition of such categories is a symptom of the decay of civilisation, that it can lead nowhere but to its ruin.

In 1946, Humphrey Slater, editor of that fine but unfortunately now extinct London magazine, *Polemic*, contributed an essay entitled «The Fallacy of Real Meaning». He wrote:

> «That linguistic theory is dangerous to orthodoxy is evident from its emphasis on the abstractness of all words, the variability of meaning, the value and the prevalence of necessarily inaccurate metaphor, and the purely emotive function of many words and phrases. If words have no real meanings, all dogma is nonsense...»
>
> «It is understandable that the study of linguistic theory should have been discouraged in the past by every religious vested interest. Today the objections of the churches are not so effective as those of the political authoritarians, and theological and academic opponents of verbal understanding are less adamant than the orthodox Marxist descendants of the Prussian police philosopher, Hegel. Fortunately, there are some countries, on parts of the western fringes of Europe and in America, where thinking is still allowed and where verbal theory is already so far developed as to be almost impossible to eradicate.[12] And we may expect that when linguistic knowledge becomes general there may be as great and as sudden an improvement in psychological and political thought, and therefore in private and public behaviour, as there was in mathematical practice when arabic numerals replaced the intoler-

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[10] For a good treatment of this problem, cf. C.L. Stevenson, *Ethics and Language*.

[11] Miss Nott, in *The Emperor's Clothes*, 1953, shows how close Mr. Eliot's views are to those of the modern totalitarians (cf. especially, pp. 131 ff).

[12] For American contributions to verbal theory, see works of Alfred Korzybski, S.I. Hayakawa, Irving J. Lee, Wendell Johnson, etc.

> ably clumsy Roman ones. Before then the cleverest men alive were unable to solve (or even to see) problems which became simple and obvious when considered in an appropriate language.»

In 1954 we may repeat that «linguistic theory is dangerous to orthodoxy,» that «when linguistic knowledge becomes general there may be [a] great and... sudden... improvement in psychological and political thought,» for at that time one will still recognise attitudinal opposition, but one will be debarred on logical grounds, not from opposing it, but from using it after the fashion of irresponsible propagandists to incite nations to wage cataclysmic «Holy Wars» against one another. One will call an Indo-Chinese an Indo-Chinese and not «a Red Devil drunk on rice-wine». But it is 1954 and we cannot be so confident of the degree of awareness of verbal theory, especially in America, where signs exist that the intellectuals who should represent the advance guard of the movement are already succumbing to the popular demand for an «emergent» American culture.

3.

> «The symposium posed questions about mass culture and democratic society without seriously debating how much freedom there is to find *effective* publication of one's ideas if they are dissenting ideas, without wondering whether democracy becomes more attenuated and may cease to exist when the war comes, and without considering how America may change in the future. Everything is viewed in a static way. We are democratic, we support the West, and the American artistic caravan is no longer isolated. The important work is to search out the healthy aspects of American life, and decide whether we can work with the movies.»
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> Norman Mailer, *Partisan Review*, «Symposium: Our country, Our Culture».

During the past few years it has been possible to see a movement towards totalitarianism in the American cultural situation. This movement has been more visible from a distance, at least more commented upon by visitors and Europeans; it has been manifest in the «reign of terror» to which American intellectuals, some of them jokingly, all of them despairingly, refer; it is coeval with the messianic drive in American politics and above all in American foreign policy. In general, America's effect—as imparted by all the agencies of propaganda, by rearmament, subsidies, threats, promises, as well as by various cultural exports and all the handiwork of warrior-artists—has been to awaken resistance in Europe's independent minds, to cause the European intellectual to formulate a «neutralism» whose elements, it seems to us, are already present in any mind which rejects absolutism.

In the preceding sections we have gone to some length to show how language, if handled uncritically, can be the vehicle not of knowledge but of systematic hysteria. Our thesis stated briefly would be this: *absolute linguistics imprison men within conflicting dogmatisms.* We might state as a corollary that it is easy to detect an absence of critical method and an excess of hardened attitudes (absolutism) in the constant bandying about of such words as «un-American», «subversive», «communist», «security-risk», «leftist», «traitor», «loyalty», and «egghead». A kind of emotional short-hand, well-adapted to the sensational headline, they function also as a kind of therapeutic which brings relief to a vast proportion of Americans, whose anxieties, God knows, are well-founded, and who are resorting to nothing if not the oldest, most risky means of escape : that from socio-political chaos into absolutes.

But while «anti-communism»—the new scheme of determining weights and measures, the single major issue a disorientated and unhappy people is presently able to recognise—has proven effective on a wide scale, something more than this has been found necessary to quicken all the military virtue in intellectual crusaders. There is a certain guilt, a certain extreme despair, a certain degradation, a certain furious leprosy, wanting which no one, however talented, can be expected to produce a *mea culpa* worthy to be ranked with Whittaker Chambers' *Witness;* such is the surrender, such the shipwreck necessary to convince oneself that nations are saved by floods of jellied gasoline that we find we are confronted no longer by acts of political choice but by thoroughgoing «illuminations»: it must be a strong light indeed which can cause a man to see darkness at noon. And since 1945, God's incandescence has been thought more and more powerfully to shed its brilliance upon the souls of even the most sober citizens of God's Own Country. Whence the notorious religious «revival» of these times, the coordinated stampedes to lay and clerical confessors; whence what the lately converted in their sinful yesterday would have called «the search for a religious surrogate»; whence also the insistence that the intellectual should «rediscover» what are called «the values of America»[13]—of America? of the blessed land, the holy soil, once thought to be a wasteland from which civility was exile, from which artists fled, now «rediscovered» as one more of those deserts in which religions are born.

The search is for an absolute hierarchy of values; in terms of it, certain Americans can achieve election, others beatification; in terms of it, a third group—look well at thy neighbour—can be classified as unAmerican. Gone is the critical acceptance of the methods of Humanism. In an article entitled «A Religion for Now», President Pusey of Harvard makes this quite clear:

> «President Eliot was a fervent believer in a religion that placed its greatest reliance on increased knowledge and good works... Judged by its fruits it has surely proved no inconsiderable faith, for it manifestly released, or at least expressed a strong creative force that has been

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[13] William Barrett, «Our Country, Our Culture». This writer expressed an opinion not long ago *(Partisan Review)* that writers should leave political considerations to the «experts». He did not specify who they were.

> productive of much good... And yet I think that it is no less true that by itself, this faith will no longer do... We need to know, but we need also to believe, and what we want especially to do is to believe knowingly and to know with conviction... But I do not want to imply that all that is lacking is knowledge. It is rather, I think, faith... It is leadership in religious knowledge... of which we now have a most gaping need. And it is because of this that those who have chosen to study religion and to give their lives to the ministry, stand again where many times before their illustrious predecessors have stood in the very center of the fight... I do not wish to argue that there is any Christian truth different from truth itself. But it is necessary to recognize that truth can be lost in a formless and uninformed faith, and that we can no longer get along in the face of our present great needs with such.»[14]

Although Mr. Pusey did «not wish to argue that there is any Christian truth different from truth itself,» one has the impression that he would find it very convenient indeed if the reader would make this ambiguous concession[15] without question. A favourite tactic of the writer who wishes to assert something without seeming to is to deny that it is his intention to assert it within a context which he has constructed carefully to imply it. What is the meaning of the phrase «it is necessary to recognize that truth can be be lost in a formless and uninformed faith»? What does faith, either formless or perfectly crystalized, have to do with the truth or falsity of any proposition? Just what are these «present great needs» in the face of which we can no longer get along without more faith as a weapon? Faith in what? In a more hardened, «informed» set of dogmas? It is the virtue of knowledge to make one tentative in one's judgments, to analyse the categories employed in one's «beliefs». Naturally, there is no room in dogma for a scientific treatment of, for example, «God». Are not the «present great needs» synonymous in the mind of Mr. Pusey with the «desirability» of abolishing (along with communism) such heresies as: a sentence to be true or false must express a proposition; metaphysical statements do not and are consequently meaningless. The best that can be said of Mr. Pusey's statement is that it represents a pitiful prevarication, perhaps intellectual dishonesty, and from that quarter from which we had felt entitled to expect resistance to the growing forces of irrationalism.

Mr. Dulles, now American Secretary of State, is quoted as saying in 1952:[16]

> «The communism of Soviet Russia represents today the active, dynamic element and the free world represents the static, passive element...

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[14] *Harper's Magazine*, December 1953.

[15] Ambiguous, because, to speak precisely, truth is *not* a thing; it is misleading even to call it a quality or a relation of propositions. Some propositions are true, others are false: *to assert that such and such a proposition is true is merely to assert the proposition.* When the word «truth» is hypostatized, the uncritical mind is at once seduced by a vast plexus of speculative metaphysics.

[16] *Partisan Review:* «Our Country, Our Culture».

> Today a revolutionary spirit grips over half the human race. There are passions that cannot be allayed by oil royalties or suppressed by foreign guns. It would seem that the non-material forces are principally serving the opposition.»

Is it impossible to see that Mr. Dulles would very much like to have some of the non-material ammunition?—a set of gemlike ideals mated to a dynamic culture, giving birth as luxuriantly as fruit-flies to an art and a literature which, as an adjunct to the foreign policy, would win converts to «Americanism» abroad? Whatever Mr. Dulles' personal views, it is certain that writers, who in regard to their American background and certain of its institutions have in the past held derogatory, damaging, neutral, negligent attitudes—who, in a word, have been sceptical—are under ever-increasing pressure to conform to a very definite pattern. On what evidence do we make such a judgment?—the very monotony of the total prospect, the almost complete harmony of the choir: no more meaningful debate, no more authentic dialogue, no more authentic discussion, no authentic opposition, no authentic resistance, no authentic revolt, no disgust. Prudence and caution stifle questions in the class-room; one's salary, the security of one's position in the community, have become virtually exclusive considerations; «controversial issues»—and all issues are controversial—must be avoided. Silence. stillness. Literature, art, life, destitute of risk,[17] become featureless, indifferent, dull: featurelessness, indifference, dullness are part of what we must term *a movement* in America.

Mr. Jacques Barzun sounded what might have been the key-note for the movement when he said:

> «In short, by 1945, America, having won a war on both her oceans, and finding herself involved in the four quarters of the earth, was quite simply *the* world power, which means: the center of world awareness...»

Power is knowledge. What kind of definition is this? Are there not thirty years between us and *1984?*

The recent symposium in *Partisan Review* was the occasion for Mr. Barzun's pronouncement, and the entire symposium may be described as a variation on the same theme. All but approximately seven of the twenty-four contributors presented their most vigorous arguments in favour of the new literature. In an amazing *salade Russe* they told us why it should exist, why it must exist, and why it does exist.

The very disorder of this mass of argument and apology and recrimination serves as protection against a direct critical thrust. It is generally impossible to know precisely what each contributer wishes to assert and what he wishes to deny. There are few assertions which are not rendered impotent by subsequent qualifications. The attempt to recapitulate some of the views expressed is therefore a hazardous undertaking, necessarily exposing one to the charge of quoting to suit the devil's own purpose. Nevertheless, from a close reading of the symposium, one gets the unmistakable impression of men who for the most part are bending to the pressures applied upon them and who are often plainly ill-at-ease because of it. It is worthwhile examining the arguments which appear in this particular symposium, for these are eloquent and expert justifications for the strange and menacing movement now afoot in the United States.

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[17] Such risk as the average American takes, he takes vicariously. The vicar is that group of men which controls American foreign policy. The stakes are fantastic but —for the average American is engaged in evading personal responsibility—impersonal: therein lies the horror of the game.

The editorial preface to the symposium established, with self-conscious triumph, the intellectual's adjustment to his society *as fact:*

> «The American artist and intellectual no longer feels 'disinherited' as Henry James did, or 'astray' as Ezra Pound did in 1913. Van Wyck Brooks himself has by now entirely repudiated the view that 'the national mind has been sealed against that experience from which literature derives its values'. John Dos Passos in 1951 would deny precisely what he affirmed in 1937. And what Edmund Wilson wrote in the conclusion to his book describing a visit to post-war Europe represents a new judgment of American civilisation. It is a judgment that would have been inconceivable twenty-five years ago, yet it is one which seems natural to most serious writers today. We have obviously come a long way from the earlier rejection of America as spiritually barren, from the attacks of Mencken on the 'booboisie', and the Marxist picture in the thirties as a land of capitalist reaction.»

Exactly: Europe has lost its magical allure; European culture fools no one any longer and today one may judge just how lost a lost generation was. Defeated, unwholesome and poor, unable to choose leaders, unable to have confidence in them, European society has lost the American's admiration; and might one not be able to go a step further and say that Europe has become instead a kind of object-lesson? that these are the affects of truancy, pride, faction, frivolity, or, if one prefers, of a century of revolution? Europe's decay declares America's health, Europe's vices America's virtues—and this seems a perfectly acceptable logic to minds habituated to absolute dualisms. Two ways of life are opposed as soon as one Way of Life is conceived: two roads, one which leads to perdition, the other to plenitude. America, and a thousand facts seem to prove it, has «worked». Europe, and a thousand facts can support the view, has «failed». And that is all; that is enough. Europe has no more to offer the mind or the eye than a spectacle of ruin—about which one may storm, over which one may exult, at which one may smile, which one may regret: Europe's spirit no longer counts; America has been delivered of her feelings of inferiority. She may be second-rate, but there is no longer any first. And today the second-rate alone has come of age.

We feel that, in the main, this is what has prompted the confused declarations of many American intellectuals who, while acknowledging the debt owed by the new world to the old, speak of the old as moribund now; America is qualified as «emergent», and hence to it belongs the strength, the hope and the future. Nor are these sentiments confined to the sphere of political relations between America and foreign powers: part of the dazzling merchandise America has to export is the production of its writers' workshops; but the young craftsman is to learn his trade at home; the only lessons to be learned in Europe are those of cynicism, inaction, lassitude. And what proves to be the posture adopted by the home-bred American writer? Mr. William Phillip's opinion—stated in his contribution to the symposium—is that:

> «The most serious artists are now concerned with sales, markets, publicity and public response. This does not mean they are less dedicated; it does suggest, I think, a shift in the idea of success: where in the '20's', for instance, achievement was located in the fringes of society or in posterity, which was merely a pseudonym for the values of the avant-garde, today the artist feels the need for immediate social approval—from a public that used to be considered beyond the pale of art.»

Picking our way through the symposium labyrinth, we come across:

> «We are farther on the road toward reducing poverty to a marginal phase of our life than any other social system...»
>
> Max Lerner,

and,

> «For the first time, starvation and physically abject poverty seem to have been almost eliminated. The average and the median standard of living are far beyond any precedent.»
>
> James Burnham.

And there can be no quarrelling with the fact of American prosperity; but behind these facts and behind all the elaborate comparisons and ostensibly pragmatic interpretations of the state of affairs on either side of the Atlantic lie other facts which, while not invalidating, certainly qualify the fact of the overwhelming prosperity that has dazzled the literary courtiers of this new Versailles. One such fact, and a very significant one, is alluded to in the Republican *Journal of Commerce* of July 14, 1952:

> «The nomination of Dwight D. Eisenhower eliminates most of the uncertainty over the future course of defence and foreign aid expenditures... The assurance of a continued high level of defence expenditures under present conditions cannot be over-estimated because the whole economy pivots around it.
>
> «Actually nothing short of the present gigantic defense program could have successfully filled the 'air-pocket' in the civilian sector of the economy... it has taken greater and greater defence expenditures just to hold business on an even keel.»

That is to say, «defence» expenditures are to be geared not only to the reality of potential «aggression» but also, and less ambiguously, to the shrinking capacity of domestic purchasing power. This is what is known as a «war economy». And one of the prerequisites of such an economy is the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear. This fact and its implications tend to sink out of prominence in exact proportion as the psychological climate, essential to the war economy, takes hold. In the midst of fear, it is almost impossible to be coolly analytical, and, as the economy gets out of immediate control, making impersonal demands on the members of the society it holds in its grip, what we can still usefully call «the democratic freedoms» tend to be eliminated. That such a process is presently going on in the United States is undeniable.[18] The legalisation of various encroachments on freedom[19] has been seen by Supreme Court Justice Black as «rapidly multiplying legislative enactments which make it dangerous to think or say anything...»[20] The legal measures, however, are only the beginning: the mutually sustaining and self-propagating apprehensions of the press, of the clergy, indeed, of the people, constitute a rabid disease for which there is no simple antidote. Norman Mailer sums it up as follows:

> «Really, the history of the twentieth century seems made to be ignored. No one of the intellectuals who find themselves now in the American grain ever discusses—at least in print—the needs of modern war. One does not ever say that total war and the total war economy predicate a total regimentation of thought. Rather, it is suggested that society is too difficult to understand and history impossible to predict. It has become as fashionable to sneer at economics and emphasize 'the human dilemma' as it was fashionable to do the reverse in the thirties. Economics is now for the experts and the crisis of world capitalism is considered dull enough to be on a par with the proletarian novel. One never hears about the disappearance of the world market, nor is it polite to suggest that the prosperity of America depends upon the production of means of destruction, and it is not only the Soviet Union which is driven toward war as an answer to insoluble problems.»

Mr. Philip Rahv, in another of the dissenting statements, makes the following comment:

> «The war-geared economy has made for conditions of prosperity which again are typically taken to mean that 'good Americanism' contains within itself the secret of overcoming the hazards of history. The illusion that our society is in its very nature immune to tragic social conflicts and collisions has been revived, and once more it is assumed that the more acute problems of the modern epoch are unreal so far as we are concerned.»

Mr. Reinhold Niebuhr also is obliged to write:

> «We are engaged in such a perpetual liturgy of self-congratulations about the vaunted virtues and achievements of the 'American way of life' that we not only make ourselves odious to the world, but also rob

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[18] Cf. Documents of the Chamber of Commerce: «Reports on Communism».

[19] We refer to the presidential loyalty orders, the McCarran Act, the modification of the Wagner Act, the Taft-Hartley Law etc.

[20] *N.Y. Times*, March 4, 1952.

> ourselves of the political wisdom required to wield power in a world which refuses to be made over into the image of America. Furthermore our frustrations and our hatred of the foe have created an hysteria through which public discussion of foreign policy has practically ceased, the foreign policy has been frozen into inflexible rigidity, and our cherished liberties are being engulfed. History has not revealed a deeper irony than the destruction of the spirit of democratic liberty in the name of devotion to it, which we have witnessed in this nation in the past five years.»

In the light of diminishing freedom, in the light of a prosperity which threatens to end in annihilation, what is literature to be positive about? What is this culture to affirm?

If, in one's consideration of the foregoing problems, one rejects the ideas (1) that the American intellectual is happily adjusted to his society, (2) that the prosperity of America is sufficient reason for dedication, and (3) that the intellectual should identify himself with the mass, then one is confronted with the final consideration, which, if accepted, will force re-evaluation of the preceding three points. This is the question of the absolute choice between America and Russia. It is argued that the intellectual must now abandon his traditional criticism of the capitalist system *qua* system and defend it in a death-struggle against «communism».

The absolute-choice argument makes new converts every day. In 1950, the famous American «liberal», Sydney Hook, in reply to a plea for religion as a necessary and beneficial opiate for the ignorant and weak,[21] asserted:

> «It is unnecessary to confront those who still have faith in freedom with a choice between Rome and Moscow in order to justify some form of common political action in behalf of an imperfectly free society.»

Mr. Hook's point of view, that

> «to defend... organized irrationalism in behalf of human freedom is an intellectual absurdity—a cruel paradox which requires that we forget whatever we know about history, social institutions and human beings»,

was, we felt, an admirable one. We should have expected him in the present context to have expressed a parallel point of view. But in the symposium, Mr. Hook seems to have changed his mind:

> «I cannot understand why American intellectuals should be apologetic about the fact that they are limited in their effective historical choice between endorsing a system of total terror and *critically* supporting our own imperfect democratic culture with all its promises and dangers.»

Either the two statements of Mr. Hook contradict one another or they do not. We suspect that they do despite the ambiguity of the second statement. The ambiguity is present in two words: «effective» and «critically». What does «critical support» effectively amount to in relation to any specific policy—for example, the support, and what amounts to an underwriting, of the Franco regime in Spain? or the promiscuous use of napalm on the civilian («native») population in Korea? Does the critical supporter of American foreign policy do anything «effectively» to counter such practices? We should do well to remember Mr. Niebuhr's comment that the «public discussion of foreign policy has practically ceased».

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[21] «An Open Letter to Sidney Hook», by Ernest van den Haag, *Partisan Review*, No. 6, 1950.

Mr. Hook, prey to the wave of indignation which sweeps America when a criticism is levelled from Europe, thrusts the same either-or at the «neutralist» which Mr. van den Haag threw unsuccessfully at Mr. Hook in 1950. The effective historical choice is limited, Mr. Hook asserts. Support America or it will be death to all intellect. This is quite clear from the body of his essay as from his last warning to neutralists everywhere:

> «Let the neutralists of the world remember. In the West non-conformists, no matter how alienated, can always win a hearing, even if they do not win a place in the Academy or earn the Order of Merit. In the land of Purges and Brain-washing, the only thing a non-conformist can earn is a bullet in the neck. This is the historical premise of our age whose recognition is binding on all humanists whether they are democratic socialists or civil libertarian conservatives or members of the alienated avant-garde.»

It seems to us that Mr. Hook is confronting us with another false choice: a bullet in the neck or a hydrogenic disintegration. Our main concern lies in avoiding both.

To deal with the explicit content of the statement, what is the meaning of the phrase «to critically support»? We suggest that if it is to have any meaning at all in relation to any problem whatsoever, in relation to any policy whatsoever, it means that a man will sometimes support and sometimes not. But it is probable that Mr. Hook's attitude may be more exactly stated by Mr. Reisman: «we intellectuals must speak in such a way as to challenge our friends while refusing comfort to our enemies», and offhand it is difficult to conceive of a manner in which you could more effectively turn control of your thinking into the hands of your enemy.

The criticism which the neutralist levels against America is directed precisely against what is totalitarian, or threatens to be, in an otherwise democratic culture. The content of most of the contributions to «Our Country, Our Culture», and the assumptions underlying the editorial preface itself, are a vaguely articulated variant of the Russian notion that art must help, in the cultural realm, to establish the greatness of the nation and the rightness of its ideology. It was as though many of the contributors were groping for a way to rationalise the increasing pressure to do this by framing ambiguous but acceptable apologies for

the «necessity». The recommendation that the intellectual cease to be alienated, that he join the ranks of the anti-communists, amounts to something very similar to the official communist requirement that he identify himself with the emergent mass, and that his theorising effectively contribute to that «emergence». This recommendation, if it is interpreted broadly, is a dangerous one. A statement, to be historically effective, need not necessarily be true. For example, the bare statement: «All men are equal», has no doubt been reiterated to great effect for several hundred years, but as it stands, and without a great deal of clarification, it is neither true nor false. Its power is purely psychological. What we wish to suggest, what from the beginning we have been labouring to point out, is that the realisation by some that such statements are meaningless *is itself an historical fact*, and, if printed, a very important one. That is the historical importance of the neutralist in the society of our time: his function will be to untie the semantic knots that priests and politicians have contrived to make permanent, in whatever interest.

Put it another way: a true statement is always to be preferred to an apparently effective one because, if it is not, the principle of verification is itself threatened. When that goes under, the range of thought will have narrowed; the nightmare of *1984* will have arrived.

4.

> «Washington. March 17. Congressional sources reported today that the United States exploded a hydrogen device in the Pacific on March 1 with a blast at least 600 times more powerful than the atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima in World War II...
>
> «It jarred an island 176 miles away.
>
> «But this new bomb is but a baby to the one United States scientists venture they can build. They estimated this bomb had an explosive force equal to 12,000,000 to 14,000.000 tons of TNT and said they can make one with a blast equal to 100,000,000 tons.»
>
> *New York Herald Tribune*, European Edition,
> March 18, 1954.

> «Now, let us make no mistake, the alternative to peace is war. I will not take time to dwell on the full consequences of war. You know what the President said about that. It is enough to realize that one hydrogen bomb as now developed has the power to completely destroy the entire Greater New York area. Just try to visualize this and realize that it would be the effect of only one bomb. It *is* a certainty that neither Russia nor our country can devise a protective system which will prevent planes getting through and bombs being dropped. Let us leave out of consideration the human cost in death and suffering, and the problems of what we do about Russia and the rest of the world in the event of victory, and think only of the economic and political situation that would confront those Americans who survived.
>
> «Government would be in complete control of the country. The task of reconstruction would be of such magnitude that it would be

> accomplished only under some system of rigid state control over a period of many, many years. With the present 20-year trend toward bigger and bigger government, plus Government control during the next war, how long do you think it would take to re-establish the fundamental American relationships between the individual and Government? Or do you think they *ever could* be re-established? In short, even if we defeated Russia—Communism would win.»
>
> Ernest T. Weir, «Peace Must Be Pursued»,
> *U.S. News and World Report, March* 18. 1954.

The phrase, «we now possess the means of destroying civilisation», is not a slogan, a bit of rhetoric, or part of a verbalistic ideology. Day and night thousands of airmen wait for an «alert». In a single night, they will kill twenty-five? thirty? thirty-five? million people.

The last appeal that can be made to a man is to preserve his life, to an intellectual his something-more-than organic integrity: his neutrality. The opposite recommendation stems from its exponents' myopic acceptance of the hypothesis that «Communism versus Capitalism» is the most vital, indeed the only vital question of our time. That question, however, simply cannot be the paramount question in the thermo-nuclear age, and must be relegated to a position far inferior to that of the survival of civilisation versus its destruction. We must learn to look at facts and to counter ideologies. Our argument is that the only legitimate reason for war, if there is one, is interest. Interest must finally be defined in terms of men and their life here on earth. Modern warfare has developed so rapidly that, as a means of protecting interest, it has become obsolete.

There are signs that the industrialist himself is awakening to this realisation. One indication is the publication in *U.S. News and World Report*, an America businessman's magazine, of a speech made before a meeting of the National Industrial Conference Board in New York last December. Besides the quotation cited above, Mr. Wier, the Chairman of the National Steel Corporation, also says the following:

> « Millions of words on the international situation appear in print and are spoken over the air. It is a striking thing that in all this you so rarely find a statement that may be described as calm, reasoned analysis. The emotional content runs uniformly high. Usually it is implied, if not directly stated, that in all details we are always right, the other side is always wrong. That our motives and intentions are completely good and honest and that those of the other side are bad and dishonest. Very frequently, Russia is referred to as 'the enemy' not only by writers and commentators but by people in responsible positions. This language and posture are logical only if you accept the inevitability of war. They are entirely out of place if the genuine objective is peace.»

We have contended that many in the West have accepted this language and posture of the absolutist. Our attack is directed against them.

books received:

THE EMPEROR'S CLOTHES, by Kathleen Knott, London, Heinemann.

A thoroughly excellent work in which literary neo-scholasticism in England is astutely and fairly attacked; we look forward to the day when this kind of book becomes the rule and not the exception in London.

THE DOCTOR AND THE DEVILS, by Dylan Thomas, New York, New Directions, 10/6.

A screenplay of minor interest. As a poet's investigation of a new medium, it reveals his defects and his virtues: intelletual vagueness combined with a genuine gift for imagery.

THE TRANSLATIONS OF EZRA POUND, by Ezra Pound, with an *Introduction* by Hugh Kenner, New York, New Directions, $6.00

Pound brings us a labour both of intelligence and love. This volume contains some of the most important translations of the 20th century.

GUIGNOL'S BAND, by Céline, translated from the French by Bernard Frechtman and Jack T. Nile, New York, New Directions, $5.00

The familiar explosiveness seems much less explosive than the more contemporary work of certain French «Neutralistes».

INKY DARKLING, by Louis Grudin, New York, The Dial Press Inc., $3.50

This book seems to us pretentious. We see no reason why the author should believe that he can do in a few weeks what Joyce took ten years to do: the publishers, not we, suggest the comparison.

CANADIAN POEMS, 1850-1953, edited by Louis Dudek and Irving Layton, Toronto, Contact Press, $1.50

Most of these poems are unknown and some should be interesting to European and American readers.

THIRTY-NINE PRELUDES, by Laurence Clark, London, Villiers Publications, 4/-

TIMEO HOMINEM UNIUS MULIERIS, by vincentferrini, Liverpool and Gloucester, Heron Press, unpriced.

SOUTH FROM COUNTY'S HILL, by Blanche Bingham, Paris, Pierre Seghers, unpriced.

THE DIARY OF DR. ERIC ZENO, by Gil Orlovitz, San Francisco, Inferno Press, $1.50

None of these four small volumes of verse is particularly noticeable. The most competent is *Thirty-Nine Preludes*, the most sentimental, *South From County's Hill*, the most sympathetic, *The Diary of Dr. Eric Zeno*, and the shortest, *Timeo Hominem Unius Mulieris*.

the red cloth

george bartholick

IN THE WINTER AND SPRING OF 1952 INTERNATIONAL TENSION REACHED AN EXTREME PITCH. NOWHERE WAS THE UNEASINESS, THE FEELING OF imminent conflict more intense than in Paris. Extraordinary pressures were being exerted upon public opinion—one remembers the repeated meetings of generals, the constant arrivals and departures of prime ministers, the somber tone of the press. One remembers the bitter polemics, the inflating prices, the social disturbances, the riots.

Everywhere, it seemed, a pairing-off of forces was going on, sides were being composed, the world was being definitively divided in two. Attitudes hardened, not only between East and West, but on both sides of the Atlantic. The "emergency", "military necessity", "the common peril" justified any measure, and the pill was sugared with phrases such as "a community of interests" and "the fight to save civilization". A crusade was afoot.

This review was founded in the Spring of 1952, in the thick of this tumult. MERLIN'S primary objective was to create a vital meeting-ground for the thought and work of American and English writers on the one hand and Continental writers on the other. With its base in Paris, MERLIN was to be international. But it was also to be independent. And it is.

The group of persons—all of them writers or painters—who established MERLIN intended to print a neutral review: not one which would declare, explicitly or through omission, an indifference to contemporary realities; but one which would recognize the validity of the greatest range of attitudes existing in a twentieth century penetrated everywhere by relativism, change, and uncertainty.

Accept the proposition that fatally, necessarily, there are two exclusive sides, two irreconsilable camps, that one's choice of doctrine is limited to two systematic alternatives, and one destroys the possibilities of understanding, one destroys the conditions within which thought can exist. To impose that false option is precisely to obliterate what it is the first duty of any thinking person to preserve: that kind of atmosphere, that kind of situation, full of diversities, of contrasts, of new possibilities, in which the creative intelligence can produce its works, in which the critical spirit can live.

The aim of this review is to print *new* writing, *contemporary* writing: not simply the work of younger or less well known writers, but of those whose achievements, refusing inherited complacencies, are distinguished by an effort to push beyond the tradition which, we consider, is dead, or is dying and which, in any case, is paralyzing our letters—our writers and their readers as well.

Apart from poetry and fiction and critiscism—to which it is natural that MERLIN, like any other literary review, devote a major share of its space—, we have felt it important to print *reportages*, *chronicles*, *documents* and *notes* that record aspects of the present situation and the present temper. While doing our best to maintain the highest literary standards, we have thought it impossible to deny space and consideration to present, often extra-literary problems. We believe that the findings and opinions of historians, of sociologists, of philosophers, of psychologists deserve a place in MERLIN. For literature, the most authentic literature, is obligatorily *engagée* in this sense: it is charged with energy and with life only so long as it stems from a critical appreciation of what is real, of what determines its forms and possibilities, and of what, secretly and apparently, concerns and preoccupies the changing men who read it.

THE EDITORS.

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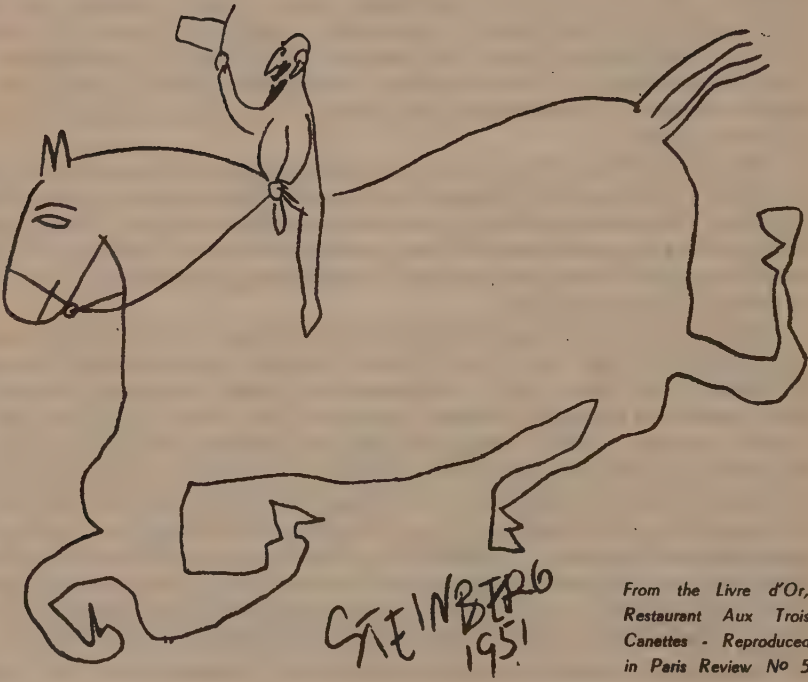

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three tales

Michel de M'Uzan

Translator's note: *The world to which Michel de M'Uzan offers us access in the three stories* (*) *that follow, is a world sensual as dreams evoke the senses, intimate and unfamiliar as a dream is and, like a dream, obsessed with the possibility of unfolding into horror, into nightmare. They are sufficiently close to the myth, these stories, far enough from fables, to make any bestiary, any key to character or incident or feature of scene much more likely to mislead the reader than to contribute to his understanding. Read attentively in the manner of poetry, with mindfulness of the power of the unexpected word and the energy it gains on repetition, they can create an atmosphere of meaning, a sense, which is that of the dislocation of whatever dailyness is left in life transformed and rendered tragic.*

For these stories have the intensity and something of the aspect of the great occidental tragic myths. They are an unexpected promontory on the vast dreary continent of modern French prose, comparable to no tales presently being told in that language, and perhaps more closely related to the early age of the supernatural, other-worldly story than to any other recognizable tradition. The language in which they unfold is magnificent. It is also economical and modest—hence, deceptive. As in a myth, the reader is guided with simplicity and the common tongue; his to discern, as he picks his way across the landscape, the salient landmarks and the smell of terror.

(*) From *Les Chiens des rois.* Copyright Librairie Gallimard, 1954.

Theresa

THE road, hardly winding, continued to rise. That Sunday, only a man and a woman were walking along it. They followed the high white wall of a large estate; there was no door opening into it. The valley vanished rearwards under a slight vapour. Every sound of cracking was distinct, and you were aware of a fine unending hum. A little sand invaded the roadway. To the left, above the embankment, began large sloping fields that joined the cloudless sky, far away. A heavy warmness prevailed over the countryside. Trees were few. It was almost noon.

The woman quickened her pace behind her husband. Her tight clothing marked a furrow at the waist. She swung her heavy hips at every step, to drag her legs along that flexed with difficulty. With her breathing's pace behind her body's, with her ponderous arms, she grew exhausted. Beneath her blond hair, her fat face grew purple; the sweat flowed, stopped at the smarting arch of her eye-brows. Her wide, well-delineated blue eyes held their sweetness despite the effort.

She looked at her sturdy man who was walking ahead with a regular step. She saw his elbows hardly moving away from either side of the great pack neatly wedged on his back. His blue shorts, too long, came almost down to his knees, and his legs with each stride stretched well to the rear. On the clean, sunburnt nape of his neck, two deep wrinkles crossed.

Theresa felt a little strength come back to her. Peter was handsome; she ran to catch up with him. He understood the pressure of her hand.

"As soon as we find some shade, we'll stop."

It came at last. Patches of light raced over the ground, and the vault of leaves threw the flat smell back that escaped from them. They spoke in low tones while walking near the trees. Some little brush covered, here and there, the fresh grass. The least noise amazed. At the wood's edge, they came upon a small hillock and installed themselves there. Their large blue-checked cloth unfolded, they opened the pack; some fruit fell out, rolling down to the grass. Their hands met, came together, to pick it up. All the bread and butter had been carefuly encircled with strong transparent paper. She smiled at a compliment. It was all good.

The meal ended, Peter stretched himself out, a newspaper over his face. He dozed. Theresa looked for an instant at his chest, which rose and fell regularly. She had remained sitting, her legs extended all their length. Breaking twigs in two, then again in two, she let go the pieces once become a size too small for her fingers.

The countryside was crushed under a cumbersome silence, and the colours drew back—the light was so strong. The horizon had risen; some brimming clouds prolonged the hills, far away. Peter hadn't moved. Theresa followed two insects with her eyes; one dragged the other, and they advanced in a straight line without avoiding what was in the way. She felt all her arteries beating. A far-off emotion returned to her mind. It had been a little afterward she began to get fat. Sometimes irritable, she felt each season come more heavily. All her attempts to get thin had been vain. A dense warmth followed the roots of her hair along her forehead; a little sweat welled out of her temples; she had trouble breathing. Thirsty, she took up the gourd, drank in great gulps, then stretched out flat on her belly, her chin on her fists.

The grass, right against her eyes, rose and passed above her head. The blades grew straight and fell back again, lay athwart each other and became tangled. Light was filtering everywhere, playing on the crests. Patches of gold, green and mauve, alternated. Here and there, you noticed the ground sketching out a pathway. A fine light down cleaved to the soil like foam.

Theresa imagined herself in the heart of a forest. Her legs tautened slightly. She saw herself a girl again, racing light and lively through the woods. She was following a straight path, leaping over stones; the trees filed away behind her and the wind sang in her ears. She could hardly see there. At a turn in the path, she ran into a boy, almost right against him. Both of them rolled in the grass. That's how she had met Peter.

Impulsively, Theresa raised herself onto her elbows. Peter had turned over; one hand under his head and one leg bent slightly back, he was still sleeping.

Great fields lay smoothly out behind him, and the soil, at their limits, was marked with a long sign. An isolated tree stretched its branches on every side, their tips heavy. The air was hardly trembling. Theresa let herself fall back again.

The Sundays were each time more painful to her. She bore up badly under these long trips across the countryside. Her feet swelled after an hour's walking; she gasped for breath the rest of the day and went home spent. During the week, she would forget a little, would be almost glad on Saturday while packing lunch, and, when they were starting out, she would often smile, looking up at the morning sky. Peter liked to leave town before moving into a new week. He went forward on the highways with his supple and unhurried step, always the same. For years, he had not changed. He didn't see Theresa's efforts; she would never complain. He had hardly noticed she was getting heavier. On Sunday, he kept on singing through the forests, darting his clear voice toward the trees.

Theresa was aware of a dull hum rising in her head; great white flashes passed before her eyes, and her body suddenly seemed to her so heavy that she thought she was sinking into the earth. She got up.

Turning on the spot, hesitating, wanting to move, she noticed a lane that went off through the trees toward open country. She took it.

The clouds had grown blue as the sky; they hovered low and drowned the fields. Far away, every line became unsure. Theresa walked alowly, with little steps, to avoid the crumbling ruts. The path turned to the left, after a few bushes, and came to an end at the corner of a large dusty field which sloped upward and went on beyond the knoll. Two rows of dry trees formed its border on the side. A stake was standing in the middle, with a dead crow hung from it. The animal was hunge, all swollen from an inward growth, and the light gleamed on its feathers. The beak and two sharp wings formed three points stretched toward the ground as though to reach there. A grating vapour whirled about the bird, then rose straight toward the sky where the sun appeared to burst.

Theresa stayed an instant motionless, her eyes fixed on the scene. At last she turned back. The lane went down; she rejoined Peter quickly. He was on his feet, wearing his knapsack, ready to leave.

The end of the day for Theresa was as drowned in haze. She felt weariness no longer, controlled her body no longer, and her legs moved forward alone, stumbling now and then. A detail would catch her eye; she took a moment's interest in the humid ditch, in a cleft tree or a far-off village. Memories came straggling back to her mind; she could hold them in no longer. Her head whirled, and in the evening, when they had come back, she collapsed all in one motion on the bed. But on that night, she got little sleep.

The next day, in the morning, risen early, Theresa made bread and butter again, and coffee. Peter was whistling back of her, in the bedroom. At the table, he ate in his usual way, calm and unhurried, chewing well and drinking in little swallows. He often smiled at Theresa and then, on his temples, a line prolonged his bright eyes. He kissed her a last time and left her with a light tap on the shoulder.

Theresa heard in the stairwell his undistracted step which slowed down at each landing. It grew softer bit by bit, and after disappeared.

Then, a fiery breath rose suddenly the length of her body, swelled her throat and invaded her head. Her breathing failed her; she thought herself smothering, rushed to the window and threw it open. Her belly, propped powerfully against the window crossbar, seemed run through by a spear. She took a little air. Below, the street was deserted; Peter had just turned the corner of the house. Theresa still saw the trace of his steps; leaning forward, she stretched out her arms. A sonorous hammering grew within her brain; her eyes were swimming; the tears flowed down her cheeks. The building wall, right and left, sloped, seeming to overhang. From the neighboring roof, a bird departed, straight up toward the blue morning sky. Theresa, an instant, thought herself able as well to fly. She leaned further outward. Oil spots were sketching, all the way below on the pavement, a great black figure. Theresa leaned still more; her feet left the floor of the room; and her heavy bosom went downward, bit by bit. The great body remained a few seconds hesitating on the crossbar. Then it teetered outwards.

From the neighboring street, a man and a woman ran up to see the fat woman who had crashed down onto the sidewalk. The gutter water was dampening her feet.

the dogs of kings

THEN a count or a king moves forward, great and lone, in that opening castle hall of his where chandeliers flame and crackle, when he remarks, spread out on a green silk cushion, level with the hearthstone, an animal bodily inert, an animal so peaceful you think him sleeping, when, moving still nearer, he conjectures at the head buried between paws—he shouts, and his voice is mighty:

"Why should kings have to gaze on dogs? Why should they take the head of these beasts between their hands, make it roll unendingly from palm to palm? Their hands are lean... Why should they walk before the fire? Why should they burn their knees when they stop opposite the animal and place their chins upon the hearth?"

But counts and kings forever slide their fingers underneath the cushion to raise the white- and black-haired beast. They bend over it; they look at it, more heedful:

"How simple it is," they mutter. "On the one side dog, on the other, pig..."

The king puts the animal down. Then he grips its head between his hands and begins to make it turn. It is turning, but deep in the gaping holes above the eyes another muzzle takes pattern with nostrils moist and quivering; and the king knows that, despite the adroitness of his hands, the instant will come when he will see the lips which tremble.

"Dogs of kings, those are shells of flesh enveloping your heads. You live unmoving and you await caressing hands to come and grip you. You are outspread on silky cushions, waiting; and we come. How still you are. Outside, they are thinking: little chap, preposterous object, and suddenly you show your slatey lips and the spit is shining on your hair. Roll..."

The king projects the beast against the wall, and the frightened servants in neighboring rooms hear skull resound on stone. They put an arm behind their backs to warn the others, and, from one to the next, work stops. But the servants know they'll have to gather the scattered cushions, will have to arrange them on the seats of chairs, will have to keep one back, for the chapel.

Voices take it up: "To the chapel." In the corridors, people are crowding. The king stands hidden behind a curtain; he is waiting for the last of the crippled to pass with his dog which runs barking along by his side; and he moves just forward to the door. On the one side and the other of the principal aisle, the faithful await his coming in, and, when he appears, every head turns toward a seat installed on a platform and girdled with green trappings. This is the instant when the king walks in the middle of the aisle; he holds a complicated crown with both his hands; once before the platform, he brings it close to his face and casts a glance through the openings cut out of the metal.

"What deepness," he thinks, "and so far. Why this tuft of fur in the center of the crown?"

You hear it said, quite low: "Hair in the middle of a crown..."

You see him stumble climbing the first step. He avoids the fall by putting his hand to a ring of wood bristling with thorns and placed at the extreme edge of the platform. He rights himself and returns to his place. There, he lays his hand, seeded with bleeding droplets, against a fragment of white silk which he next shows to the faithful, so that everyone may see the scarlet pattern.

And while the crowd is bowing, while the king is slowly lowering his right arm to start the organ, the vaults of the chapel begin their trembling.

the end of a war

FROM the countryside, burned by the sun of a summer afternoon, there arose no more than the incessant hum of the insect world and the crackling of stiffstalked wheat. A first quick shadow had just glided into the sky, still crossed with short, white gleaming trails, when at one point along the edge of the forest, which ran borderless into the fields, a slow parting of low branches brought into view a soldier.

The man stood an instant motionless, one hand still clinging to the foliage of the bushes. As far as his gaze would carry, he could only discern deserted lands which, however, seemed tilled. Then he moved up, scanning this calm landscape over which even the wind had ceased to blow. A light weapon, slung from his throat by a thong, was hanging across his belly. He was wearing an ample uniform of rough gray cloth with deep pockets down to knee-level. The collar of his jacket was open.

The soldier came to a halt after a few steps; before him, fields formed a kind of slope whose crest sketched an undulant line which, dipping slightly, was offset by a file of trees biting into the sky, where a few round-edged clouds suddenly appeared without his seeing them draw near. His small, dry eyes seemed quite light beneath his sunburnt forehead; his short hair streaked with tufts of white, his emaciated jowls, disclosed a weariness or perhaps some attrition which the posture of his body would not betray. With a last glance, he spanned the countryside and had a smile which, though not letting his teeth be seen, dug new wrinkles into is face; well he recognized, in that luminous landscape, the summer afternoons when wars are declared. How many times, since the outset of this war, had he not already seen the ground go dry around roads ploughed up in fissures.

Could he forget the epoch of first battles, that which they were later to call the time of great marching? Reaches were vaster then; plains cleaved to other plains, each unfolding broader than the one before and vanishing under the powdery dust kicked up by the passage of troops. It is from these dust waves, heaving and settling again to the rhythm of heels, that memories arose, jumbled together, memories of suffocations without suffering, of distances growing to keep men separate, of grotesque words, of the catch of muscles which, near the hip, marked the foot attack, then, more precise, the memory of the ponderous flight of birds wheeling tirelessly about those great conic bells scattered without order over the countryside and meant for the troops, who were provisioned there. The men could detect them from far-off by their steel walls gleaming in the sun, but often they passed them by without even a turn of the head, their eyes fixed on the enormous spirals which, silent, dazzling, set the horizon in an almost continuous stir. It was also in the dispersion of these dust-clouds, volatilized into the sky or crushed against the earth, that the time of great marching had come to an end. The plains had given way to rolling landscapes with narrow perspectives while insensibly strategy was being modified. A multitude of small units had been constituted; in the beginning, they had still covered much ground, but they had gradually dissolved, and now the men marched alone.

Isolated for weeks or for months, the soldier, watching the clouds which were piling up above the hillside, put, for the first time, this question to himself: "Which of them had been best?"—That most ancient discipline which guided him must as well have led those of his companions who were as he, perhaps going forward on their way. Risen at daybreak with their emaciated and tanned bodies as soon watchful, had it been they, the best?

He took his gun in his hand. The time to halt had not yet come. He turned his back on a landscape which he might have found familiar at an earlier time, and he departed with great strides, edging along the forest whose shadow was beginning to reach the hollow of the fields. He would stop later, after nightfall. He was certain of being one of the last to keep up the fight; rare survivors among his former comrades were still marching, indefatigable and precise. For them as for him, every indecision had vanished. Their route was plotted beforehand; they discovered it each instant. Each instant, in the slant of a tree, in the arangement of a patch of sunshine on a hill, the unquestionable signs were revealed which were directing soldiers in that phase of the war. The men moved up, passed before the vestige of a yard, noticed a brook splitting the prairie, followed it, slowed their step... Yes, it could be said, never, isolated though they were, had soldiers shown themselves so infallible. And while he was congratulating himself on his training, on the discipline which he had always imposed on himself and which now allowed him to go forward tranquilly, smiling once again, this time thoughtful of the moment when, uneasy, he had been waiting for orders, the soldier, surprised, saw the day break abruptly as though the sky had torn.

The dampness which bathed everything shattered into clear drops, sparkling on the grass and along the rushes pressed into a compact mass on the edge of a river to which the fields sloped softly down. The surface of the water broke into irregular ripples, dull or bright, warped sometimes toward one shore, sometimes toward the other. The soldier sneaked between rushes which masked the bank from him; his shoes sank into the loam, and, each time he wrenched them out, a soft cracking rose in the air. He stopped on the bank; the water struck against his foot and flowed back with a bell's sound, fine and constant. Now and again, a whitish mist adhering to the other shore came loose in bundles which slid with the current to the middle of the river. After glancing toward the brightness downstream, the soldier waded slowly into the water, without hesitating. He resisted the current at first, then, when he had gone in chin-high, let himself be carried away. He made rapid progress, with his gun now just above the water; although he kept nearly upright, it was just as if he had been swimming; the air he exhaled at regular intervals formed in the water elongated bubbles which turned on themselves and brushed against his cheeks. He saw the fields teeter before his face and move behind him. Then it was as though the river bed had suddenly risen; little by little the current lost its strength; the river described two or three windings before it reached a broad, flat place, planted with trees. A light from the glade began to play over the water; the river was going through a forest.

The current had grown very weak; the soldier had the impression that the river had given way to a small lake with confining shores. All along his passage, he had not once shivered; he drew near one bank and, insensible to the cold, stayed motionless, almost entirely immersed. A movement of the water made him stagger slightly; he held himself with his foot around a root; the water was singing against his ear. At that moment, he raised his eyes toward the other bank and saw, facing him, a ragged old woman who was working her garden, quite near the edge. She was bent double, leaning on her spade; her white hair floated in front of her face and hid her eyes from him. A barely perceptible flutter of her skirt accompanied her calm gestures; sometimes she turned her head towards a wooden shack surrounded by brush, and took up her work again. The foliage of the highest trees was pierced by sunbeams strewn with points of brightness; it looked down over the badly ordered rows that made up the garden.

The soldier waited a long while before readying his gun, watchful not to provoke the least eddy. Then he aimed carefully at the old woman, searching out the shoulder which jutted like a hump from the shabby cloth. He pulled the trigger. And while the woman, as though projected, fell into the water with the motion of a swimmer diving, he took a deep breath and let himself glide to the bottom of the river. Holding his breath, the soldier, from his glaucous shelter, noticed a vague shadow at first some distance away, then, nearer, the old woman's face which seemed, its eyes wide open, powerfully swimming to meet him.

translated by Philip Oxman

Pablo Neruda

Translators' Note: *Pablo Neruda was born in* 1904 *at Temuco, Chile.* Twenty Poems of Love, *of which English versions are printed on the following pages, first appeared in* 1924. *Neruda at the age of thirty-two was a well-known poet in South America and in Spain, where he lived as consul for Chile during the Civil War and where too he met and became friendly with Lorca, who had praised his work. Neruda was then helping the Spanish people so far as his position as consul would allow, until finally ordered to return home by his government. On November* 7, 1938, *the second anniversary of the defence of Madrid, his book* Spain in My Heart *was published on the last free strip of Spanish soil. In* 1942 *he was again consul, this time to Mexico. Elected, a Communist, to the Chilean Senate, he supported Gonzalez Videla's promise of political reforms until the latter assumed the role of dictator, when Neruda attacked him so fiercely that Videla retaliated first by burning his home, then by charging him with treason. Neruda, hunted throughout the land, was forced into exile. His latest book,* Universal Song, *was published from "somewhere in America".*

A comparison of these translations with their Spanish text will reveal great disparity both in meaning and form. This is intentional. We have not tried to produce a literal version of the Love Poems.

Neruda's early writing was by no means impeccable and yet the greater fault lies with those translators who, keeping all too faithfully to the movement and language of the Spanish, and loyally shepherded by the dictionary, use a speech owing little in the end either to Spanish or English, much however to an almost total lack of a sense of poetry and of humour.

Above all we have tried to write versions that could be read as English poems in their own right. Inevitably, much of the Spanish has gone. Instead, we have tried to fit the subject to its new context, and to give an effect similar to the original. And so these are not translations strictly speaking, but adaptations, and several of the poems are entirely new, although taking their theme from the original Neruda poem.

The vigour and lack of restraint in the original we have tried to carry over into contemporary verse. So that these poems may strike queerly on the present-day reader, whose writers have accustomed him to everything else, but seldom to vigour, or lack of restraint.

1

Thy woman's body, white hills and white thighs.
And my labouring body to dig at its roots.
Of this world you give its advantage back.
And a son starts from the Earth's depth.

Alone as a tunnel. The birds flew from me.
Over me moved the night's dark surge.
And to survive that spite I cast you as a weapon.
For my bow, a shaft: a pebble in my sling.

But the double edge has turned, and I must love you.
Thy body of skin and musk, its milk yearning but firm.
The clustered flesh of thy body, eyes open but absent.
Tight stitches of maiden-hair, thy voice slow and sad.

My woman's body. I shall continue in its grace,
On my uncertain way, with unbounded yearning, and thirst.
To the darker places where perpetual thirst follows,
And tiredness follows, and infinite complaining.

2

You in this dying light are snared,
Obscured, made wan and faint, and stood
Against the gentle spirals of the dusk,
Which as they rise, circle about you.

Silent, my love, and motionless.
In this hour of the dead, bright with flame
That you have taken from the ending day.
And solitary too. Now, from the sun

Some flowers fall on your dark blouse;
Great webs of night ascending from your heart;
Things locked in you come back into the world;
White and blue villages upon you feed.

Swung in an orbit of black and gold,
The Sun's rich victim, drawing down
All its new flowers, till that Sun
Is dead. You are the mistress of creation.

3

The steep gloom of pine-trees, the wave's surge breaking.
Slow lights that interweave, a single bell,
The day's end falling in your eyes, my love,
The Earth sings in you as waves sing in a white shell.

And the rivers sing in you, and I flow outward on them,
As you direct them, whither you make them run.
Trace with your first bow-shot my best way,
And I'll no more shoot quivers in the sun.

You turn about me like a belt of clouds,
Your silence mocks the hours in which I lay
Troubled by nothing. Your arms translucent stones wherein I lie,
Wherein my violence is lulled, my kisses die.

And your mysterious voice, stained with love's colour,
Folds close the shifting echoes of this night,
Much as the wind that over the fields wanders
And folds down, wheat in its yellow height.

4

In this hot depth of summer,
The morning is close, storm-filled.

Like white rags waving good-bye the clouds shift
Shaken by the departing hands of the wind.

The many hearts of the wind
Throb over us, whom love has silenced.

Throb between the trees, like tongues
Singing of war and just singing.

The wind, confusing the sparrows' quick flight,
Swift thief of the dead leaves,

The wind destroys, puts down, as
Waves without foam, weightless, under oblique flames.

Soughing, it breaks and drowns, gives up its strength,
Fighting at the gates of the summer wind.

5

For you to hear me,
                    my words,
Narrow occasionally,
Like gull's tracks in the sand.
                              Some beads,
Mixed with a drunk hawk's bell,
For your hands,
                soft as grapeskin.
I look at these words, but far from them.
And you have more meaning,
                              who clamber
Over my old desolation like ivy,
Clinging to its damp sides.
                            In this game,
And its blood, you are mixed.
My words desert me, and
                          you overflow.
Before you my words were the loneness
You occupy.
            And knew more of your ways,
Than ever they knew of my sadness.
            The force of my anguish
Still drags them,
                violent dreams still, at times
Overwhelms them. In my bruised voice you hear
Other bruised voices,
                    old mouths crying out,
Old wounds seeking pardon. *Love me. Come with me.*
Lest the wave of my anguish drowns me.
                          But my words are coloured
With our love, and you
                        in all things overflow.
I sit,
    making a collar of beads,
                              for your hands.
White hands soft as grapeskin.

6

You, I remember as you were, last Fall.
A grey cap on your head: your heart quite tranquil.

In your eyes the confused lights of dusk.
Leaves falling into the waters.

Gently the leaves clustered in your voice.
Locked my arms, close as a bindweed,
In the midst of my need, a hyacinth flower,
And gentle, curved over my soul.

The leaves curl on the floor of the pool. The Fall is distant
Grey-cap, voice of a bird, heart that was my hearth,
To which my last demands have homed,
Where my contented kisses die like sparks.

From the sky, a ship. From the landscape, hills.
Of you I remember, smoke cut by light, the calm water.
The movement of the dusk behind your eyes,
The leaves turning within your soul, dryly.

7

Your eyes are like waters.
Leaning out, at evening,
I cast my sad nets into them.

Staked to the waste of my solitude,
As a shipwrecked man
Waving his aimless arms, I make

Red signals to your vacant eyes
Like seas that lift
Against the lick of a beam.

You claim only the shadows, woman
Mine and far off. I see, within your face
The coastline of your fear loom up.

Leaning out, at evening I cast
Sad nets into your eyes
Disturbing their deep waters.

With their bright beaks, the night birds
Strike at the early stars that burn.
Likewise in me when you are close they strike.

Night, a dark mare, gallops
Over the land
Scattering blue sheaves.

8

Hum white bee, honey drunk in my soul,
And leave a twisted spiral of grey smoke.
And when there is no more to say, why speak?
With that, I am like one who all the world
Could span, within the simple compass of his palm
And had it read, and with that information
Lost the span, the world and how he saw the world.

My quiet one.

Close your deep eyes wherein the slow night stirs,
And from your timid body strip your clothes,
Whose arms are new cut flowers, whose lap a rose.
You have deep eyes wherein the slow night stirs.
Your breasts are like twin spiral-shells that reach,
Upon your belly a moth of shadow sleeps.
You have deep eyes wherein the slow night stirs.

My quiet one.

It rains. The sea wind lifts a stray gull.
Through the street on bare feet walks the rain.
On that tree the leaves are moaning, like sick men.
My still soul hums, white bee, though you are gone,
And the grey spirals of its flight turn,
Dip, grow wide, and in the air are ruined.

My quiet one.

9

Drunken on turpentine,
And deep-mouthed kisses,
Your wet body
Lodged in my arms,
Feasted we guide
This barge of flowers
Over the sky's hot rim

Out of the wasted day,
Held by the solstice.
Dozed through the throat of night,
We rose with the bitter taste
Of land on our mouths.
And came to the Fortunate Isles.
And lay like fish
Under our net of kisses.

10

Somehow we have lost this dusk.

Unseen at evening my hand in your hand
While the blue night falls over the Earth.

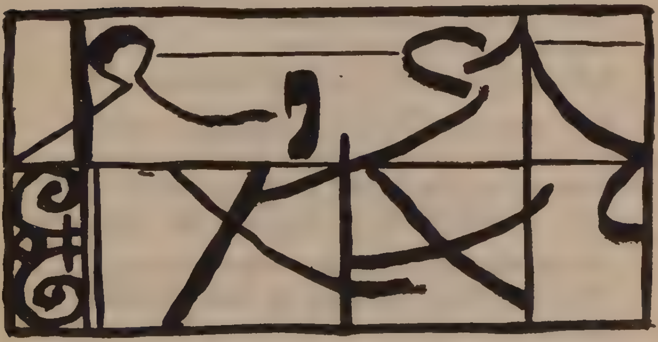
Out of my window I have seen us walking
In sunset's fairground on the distant hills.

At times, like a florin we spent,
The sun's coin flashed on my palm.

Why does my love rise up when I am sad?

The book I always read at dusk fell down.
My coat fell down, like a hurt dog at my feet.

Ever and ever you draw off at dusk,
Out where it shifts, masking the statues.



11

almost beyond the sky,
Between two hills,
Half the moon is anchored.
The night scoops out your eyes,
They sometimes smile
Sometimes look down, and then
My heart throbs like a shuttle
In the windy air, where
Blue metal scarves are forged.

The wind rises. Blows over graveyards,
Breaks up your glance, tears up
Great trees and turns yourself
A memory of wheat and smoke
To air that I cannot describe,
It moves too much. Like my desire.
Blows up a lily, changes it to bells,
Buries the bells and smelts them
To a knife, deft in my still, still heart.
Rain falls. The stars are blurred,
Their edges all washed out. Lost your glance

12

For my heart your breast is shapen,
And your freedom is my wings.
In your heart slept certain things,
That my voice will take to heaven.

Eternally receding like the waves.
Over the far horizon's poise,
You are illusion in my days,
Like flowers grown beneath the Moon.

As I have said you cry within the wind,
As the pines do, even those hewn as masts,
Keeping a quiet height in the enormous
Air. Singing when all the wind has passed.

A bell tolls where I wake. Old voices come.
The roads have gathered up their travellers.
And at the toll, over the following waves
The birds fly South. Loose tenants of your song.

13

I have crept over
Your body's white map
Like a patient spider.

At the edge of the dusk
I will spin out tales
That you may be glad:

By a green tree
A white swan floats
In the time of grapes.

And the Earth is full
Of fruit and coloured stones
For your mouth and ears.

In an old harbour
Lazy as dream
Filled with quiet

We shall pick boatmen
By the sea enchanted
To steer us outward.

Between my lips and voice
Lives a thing like a bird
That sings like a bird.

Something in me sings
Climbs up in my mouth
And the words clang out

As if madmen ruled
In a tower of bells,
Where I am hoist

By their crazy ropes
To a cold height
Where my heart folds

Like a nightflower.

14

Out of the firmament each day the slow lights fall.
In flower and pool you are their subtle guest.
This spray of flowers in my hands I press
And call your head. You are both flower and girl.

Amongst these yellow leaves I stretch your limbs,
More fair than leaves—yet not so fair.
Rest here. Set out in time—yet time outlive,
I'll write your name in smoke throughout the air.

My window. Outside the rain falls stark, fills up
The sky's wide net. The clustered winds drag out
Old leaves and whirl and stick them to the wreck
Of boats the night snapped off. Dead birds.

I see you down the wind. The night-sky shapes your arms,
Your face looms near. Stay, stay and reply to me
Till the last gust is blown. And you are scared. Yet stay.
While in your eyes intruding shadows climb and turn.

And in the morning I will bring you, after the storm,
Out of the mountains, some hazel-nuts to satisfy your throat,
Petals to please your sun-shot body, matching its pearl.

And in this early season I will be that force within
The cherry stone, bringing its pulp and colour to thy mouth,
And we shall make a fruit out of the day, to eat in darkness.

Sated by lights that from the firmament fall down
Into your hands, and yellow leaves, and smoky rain,
The broken sky, the changing shadows in your eyes, my love

Even the storm that ravishes our blood when stars arise.

15

To me it is as if
You are not here
When you are quiet.

As if you heard far off
The things I say, and yet
Made no reply.

And seemingly your eyes
Outside your body move
Watching us both.

As if, when quietly
Apart from me you lie
A kiss had stopped your mouth.

I love you here, as if
With quietness you spoke.
Oh teach me to use

Silence for words.

16

Mine, this night sky, and you a cloud thereon,
The mood and colour of perfection.
And mine your mouth. In our love's reason,
My flesh your flesh, these two, one body's season.

The light that stirs about your feet;
The sour wine your mouth makes sweet;
The shout into the dusk that is our speech;
The dream's intoxication by thy breath

Are mine. And more is mine. Hear me cry out
I am the wind at dusk, and will awake
Carrying her name off from his lips. My voice
Will echo in the hillsides of her rape,

Her taking up, her pain within this net
Of music—where, once caught, spread out like wind, is set
Far as her own wise glance whose brink
Is morning after dream—where passions sink.

17

Thinking. Catching at shadows. And thinking,
How you are distant, further than anyone.
Thinking. Setting birds free. Destroying images.
Lights put down in the Earth, buried, forgotten.

Up there, high up in a tower whose walls
Are made of fog, filled with machinery, grinding
What hope is left to nothingness. Alone.
Into your turning wheels the night falls headlong.

You are changed now. An alien. Something
I think about as I walk down the life I put
Before you, once. Or, running, open-mouthed
Through a streaming mist, leaping the sea—stones,
Crying out over the dead water, my fury.

Which painted rim of what enormous fan were you?
Far off as you are now, you always were—and yet seemed near.
And the woods are burning, burning in blue double flames,
Trees split by heat reach up and fall and fall,
And in the leavings of that fire I am scarred.

Who calls? Who runs out there? Stop, stop—
This silence is aloud with noisy shadows—stop!
Time past. Times set apart for me they were. Who calls?
Only a horn singing on the empty wind. Come here.
Its sour compassion twists my knotted flesh,
Each root is burning, each wave strikes back. Who calls?

And all of me is rocked—now gay, now sad,
Now with you, now without, but never still.

Thinking. Burying lights. And thinking, who are you now?
Who calls...

18

And it is here I shall love you.
Between
enormous pines
where the wind
Runs down,
disturbing the water
and
The moon is fixed between its ridges.
Above us, like naked giants, the clouds
Wrestle and fall apart. Out of the West
A gull loiters on the quiet air. A sail.
The black yards of a ship. The tall stars.
Alone. Sometimes
in the dawn
I wake
Wet through to my heart.
Sea noises
far
In the distance, echo,
and echo again.
This place a harbour. Here I shall love you.
Next to me, here. In vain the sky's edge
Hides you. Even in these cold things I love you.
Sometimes my kisses heaped on those dark ships
Run out to sea. They never will make home.
Am I to be like them without an anchorage at last?
The wharfs are sad when evening moors against them.
And is it possible to love what one has not?
Hunger makes tired. The slow dusk
my lethargy
Moves as the night slips in,
starting a song.
And the moon at her spindle,
twists dreams,
And dreams out of the cloud's white skein.
The largest star looks at me with your eyes.
Your name between the pine's wire leaves, is song.

19

Lithe girl, brown girl,

The sun which makes apples
Hardens the wheat
And stiffens the sea-weed

Made your body with joy.

Your brightening eyes
And your mouth,
Which has the smile of water.

You stretch your arms

And the black sun
Snatches at the coils
Of your loose black hair.

As if it were water

You tantalise the sun,
It leaves in your eyes
Two shadowy pools.

Girl lithe and brown
Nothing draws me to you,
But drives me off

Like the sun's high noon.

Within you lies the young
Delirium of the bee,
The sea's abandonment,

And the thrust of the seed.

Even with this, my heart
Darkly seeks you out.
The joy in your body

Your rising voice.

You are a soft brown moth
Chased in wheatfields,
And through poppies under water.

20

Tonight I can write the most sad rhyme.

Write, for example: "The dark is starred,
And the planets shimmer, blue, in the distance."

The night wind throbs in the sky and sings.

Tonight I can write the most sad rhyme.
I wanted her, and at times it was me she wanted

Such nights as this her wanted self was mine
And under such a sky I kissed her, endlessly.

She wanted me and at times it was her I wanted.
How could I not have loved her large fixed eyes?

Tonight I can write the most sad rhyme.
Feeling that she is no more mine, that I have lost her.

And the always vast night grows enormous without her,
And the poem falls down like rain on the wheat.

Who cares if my love was too feeble to keep her?
This night will bear no argument. She is not with me.

That is all. Far off someone is singing. In the distance.
My heart is empty of delight now I have lost her.

As if to bring her close my eyes look out,
My voice sings out her name. She is not here.

This night is similar, whitens the same trees,
But we, as we were then are not as now.

And it is true, I do not want her, but how much I wanted her.
In the wind my voice climbs to reach for her.

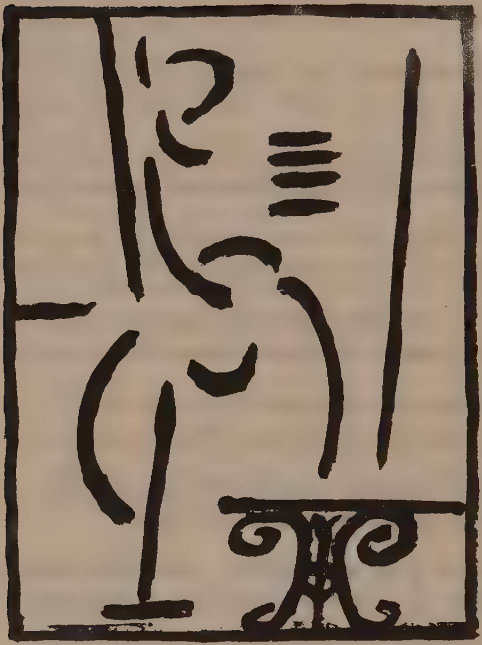
Another will have her now. And have my love,
Her voice, her clear tight body, and her patient eyes.

It is true, I do not want her, but perhaps I want her.
And love is not so short, though short, that I forget her.

Because on nights like this within my arms she was,
My heart is not resigned that she is gone,

Although this worst pain is the last she causes me,
And this the last line I shall write to her.

translated by Patrick Bowles
and Christopher Logue



some basic principles of human engineering and reflexions upon an erotic book

Austryn Wainhouse

1. *A first proposition. The accursed city.*
(*Powerlessness and solitude...*)

One could, for example, say this:

Unless he chooses to cease writing (and I am not sure weakness is preferable to strength, expression to silence), a writer—some of the persons who will read this are writers—has no choice but to contemplate the times in which he participates, to do his contemplating historically, agonizingly to reappraise his situation, and to elaborate an attitude, a pose as he stands on that stage before a packed house that perhaps contains no one but himself.

For years now, for whole lifetimes, we have all—writers and readers—been treated to nothing but descriptions of a "shrinking universe", an "extreme world tension", phrases which, by generalizing it into a common plight, succeed in sweetening some of the bitterness of an immediate and particular reality: a reality of hallucinating uneasiness in the face of others, and, it goes without saying, in the face of oneself. The great movement to "escape from it all" is matched by "the dwindling prospects" of avoiding something "inevitable" to whose fatality we are, much less indirectly than we prefer to suppose, plainly instrumental. On the larger plane, our "fate" is sufficiently "complex" to be doubted: "something is bound to happen", "something will surely turn up", "life goes on, it always has". And this life? It is lived by a huge crowd, a panicstricken but at the same time numbed crowd standing knee to knee, waist to waist, breast to breast, eye to eye, in an icy vacuum where everyone is confronted by his "fellow-man", glued to him in an appalling intimacy of mutual distrust and dread and blind hope. History has made you naked, worry has made you thin, the wind makes you shiver. You shut your eyes and deny it, reader, and I don't blame you. But if you unclench your jaws, unseal your lips, what are you going to say to this other? Will you praise the weather? speak of this genial ambiance? of the likelihood of a war in Asia? of your preparations for survival? Or mumble indifference?

An "honest man" can be indecisive to the end. You needn't necessarily decide unless you are a writer. But then you must. Artistically, we are, as they put it, in "a rut" just as we are humanly in an impasse; or, as it looks to me, in a kind of harrowing, breathless suspension, a no-man's-land crease between destinies and certitudes and possibilties.

Being is doing; what are you going to do? "Nothing," do you say, "because there is absolutely nothing that can be done"? No one will hold you to your word—which, if it means anything, means that being is impossible.

But, no matter how it is put, this propositon, this true or false picture, leaves you cold.

However, if you write—and since you write words that mean something, for they cannot mean nothing—, then you are caught, caught hot or cold. Caught by the discovery you are caught, caught and unable to budge in this "outer space" crease of silence and uncertainty and indifference. Look around you. You are alone.

But this proposition finally collapses: for you cannot tell a man, no, not even a writer, that he is alone; even if it were true, it is only true so long as there is neither speech nor writing, and stops being true as soon as it is expressed. Words can suggest but not express this truth of silence and isolation and helplessness.

2. *An alternative proposition. The founding of the beloved city.*
(It might be in his power to...)

Take with you a loaf, a goatskin and some sticks of wood. Get you upon a small grey ass, a little four-legged animal, and ride into the desert. Stop on the evening of exhaustion, and dismount. Light a fire for goodcheer's sake, eat your bread, drink your wine, let there be nothing left, not a drop, not a crumb, and mould two bricks of dung. A crowd will not fail to come up and gather round you. Then, within the sight of all your enemies, place one brick upon the sand, the second upon the first, and bid the others do the rest.

continued page 261

Jaap Mooy

automatic shock-absorber
(1954. 22 × 26 cm.)
cathédrale mécanique
(1954. 34 × 39 cm.)
souvenir de jeunesse
(1953. 31 × 57 cm.)
triumph over Columbus
(1954. 42 × 64 cm.)

four illuminations

it's fun
ANIMALS
AUTOMATIC
SHOCK-ABSORBER
M
magic
1
turn
a tap
UPSET?
throw a switch
2
AND
D
REA
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rea
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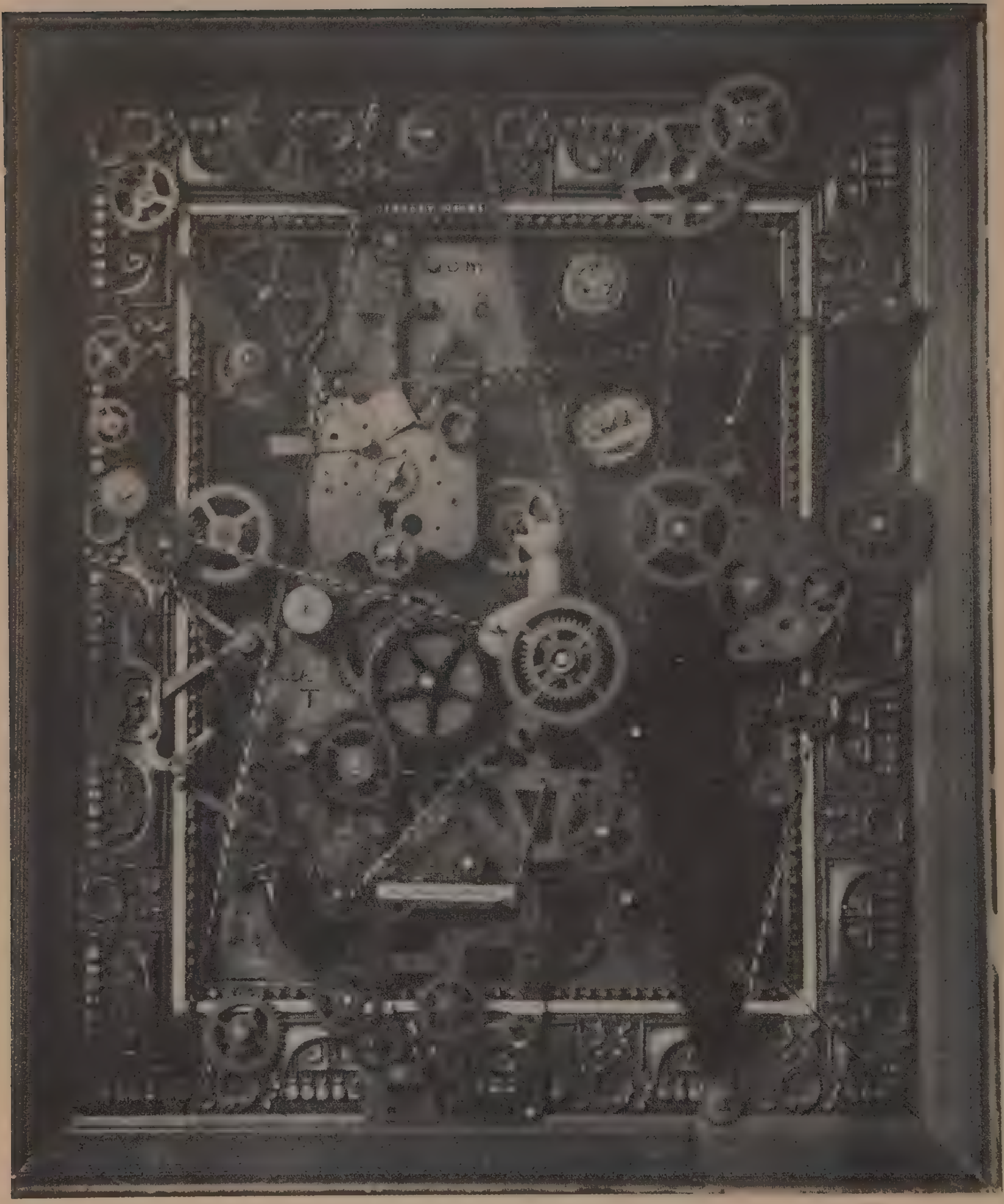

Make them love you, make them fear you, one and the other and both at once, for if you would gain power over men, you must gain control of their energies. Speak little; when you speak, speak never to them and speak strangely, now smile mysteriously, now wear a menacing wrathful look for if you would gain undisputed power over men, you must gain control of their imaginations. You must make your own their waking and their sleeping hours, their time and their resources and their passions; you must absorb them, determine the forms they take, govern their application. Love and fear, work and play, breathe and dream and sweat and sing, men must unceasingly do these things in terms of you, for you sake, and at your pleasure.

Become their conscience. Let them see you everywhere, above all in their innermost selves. Let them see not your figure, but its image; make them show their nakedness to you. Contrive to persuade them—by signs, by insinuations—that it is really themselves they are pleasing, really for their own welfare you deign to crucify them. And let them marvel when you take away food from their hands and drink from their lips. Be their god.

However you act, keep in the forefront of chance, one step at least ahead of it and you will possess the future, plenty or dearth will be yours to distribute. Block every window, every door with the intimation of your presence, fix the man in the cell with your rare gaze and his eye will not wander in chase of stars. So long as they suppose the divinity is there before them, men will not look over its shoulder into emptiness and the unknown.

Writing about souls, Sade speaks of their usefulness: ascribe a soul to a man; convince him that he has one; get him to entrust its care to you; and you control that man—not, of course, that "soul" of his you have invented, but his dreads and energies, which are real.

Now you are in power and all the world believes you were born to command. You wish to continue to rule—the world would not be able to tolerate your abdication—: well then, preserve the illusions in your subjects who would prefer to perish rather than be free, decree ever harsher laws and enforce them not only unpityingly but arbitrarily: the more your might exacts, the more grateful, the more flattered will be the weak to yield what they must. But if, drunk or ill, your head begins to reel, your shoulders to stoop, if once you recoil, if you show scruple, if you blench at the horror and relax your grip... instantly proclaim a holiday and scatter thin gold coins heedlessly, liberally here and there, ordain tumult, put out meat and beer and let havoc cry until you recover a stomach to extinguish the fever in blood.

Let there be an interruption in the rhythm wherewith the lash descends on skin, let a single iron collar, disintegrated by the rust of tears or rain, slip from a single neck... and the individual who while the going was good was willing to toil and suffer in blissful security, now suddenly feels abandoned. For him, the meaning has gone out of things, he is as though shipwrecked and circled round by emptiness doubts of his own existence. The rules have been suspended: a thousand prohibitions circumscribed his existence, around him now extends only a shapeless ocean of uncertainty. Now thrown onto his own, an outcast, only irregularities seem possible, only disorders, only licentiousness... only the impossible.

If then you would have him love you the more, let your slave sometimes know the distress of manumission, the ignominy of deliverance, of the beast in him. Repentant, he will soon approach you with hollowed eyes or downcast. Recapture him, console him, reconvince him, encage the animal and civilize the man. Woo him again, deprive him again, let him adore you, withdraw your affection, enfuriate him anew...

And repetition finally supplies a meaning to this drama. The city acquires a history.

3. *The city in danger.*
(How much can they stand?)

They then do well when they choose sexually to interpret history. Mirabeau, it is said, read—and even wrote—chapters of erotic books while preparing and before delivering speeches at the Assembly. The libertine, the poet begins the Revolution; the Puritan "consolidates" it: observe the center of gravity shift from the salons and the Palais Royal to those austerely furnished chambers from which a Robespierre, dressed in some neutrally-colored costume of stout cloth buttoned to the neck, does his dictating. From the brothels and gaming houses of Saigon to Hanoi where the Vietminh decrees restraint, an end to promiscuity, and marriages that may be performed only if "they serve the interest of the people". Travellers say that in the new China there are no flies; and no prostitutes in the streets of the new Peking.

In Xenophon, in Machiavelli, in Sade, in Freud one sees the clear connection between tyranny and seduction. (What voter, as he presents his baby to be nuzzled, licked and kissed by the campaigning politician, does not thorughly well know that twenty years hence, the people's choice will march his child off to be slaughtered in the wars?)

Our own is after all the age of curious political maneuvering: the age *par excellence* of queer balances of power and payments, of fomented unrest, of *agents provocateurs,* of culture congresses. Of flirtations with strange bedfellows. Of unconditonal surrender and bewildering capitulations. Of virtually universal corruption. And of the problem raised by dangerous books. *Communist Manifestoes* and *Fanny Hill's Memoirs* are equally capable of sowing seeds of unrest in placid breasts: both are impassioned exhortations to adventure, both inflame that kind of ambition which is scarcely compatible with humble labor, patience and resignation.

But is it placid breasts we want? does passivity serve the interests of our dynamic conservatism? The furious persecution of heresies alimented the Church: to be strong, a doctrine must conquer its rivals: and to orthodoxy that precisely is the importance of doctrine. No master will survive unopposed, no orthodoxy will endure that does not know how to turn mutinous outbursts and instinctive revolt to its own advantage. It is not true that modern man, not knowing which way to turn or what to believe, fatigued and more or less faithless and fed up, the fight knocked out of him, can be safely allowed to get his hands on any book; but is it safety we want? do we not need men who are capable of rising to meet the danger? Forbidden books may have a beneficial effect, like purges. It is often deemed wise to stimulate an insurrection in order subsequently to be in a position to quell an insurrection. It is important to set examples. Alarms, the prevalence of danger keeps a man on his toes. And the gravest threat to a city is to have a population that prefers to lie flat on its back.

4. *The city meets the challenge with a response.*

("But to find oneself planted in the thick of this *rerum concordia discors,* of this marvelous uncertainty, in this multiplicity of life, and not *to seek to ask,* not to tremble with the desire and the voluptuous delight to enquire, not to hate Him who has made it so, perhaps to scorn and deride Him unto the point of being sick with scorn and derision—that is what I call *contemptible*...")

For it has got to be a question of *challenge and response*—melancholy, tedious, absurd—provided one envisages social structures whose vitality, whose sense, whose justification has got perpetually to be submitted to the test. (Nor doubtless would this perpetually dreary situation be at all improved if the plurality of states were to be superceded by the melancholy, tedious and absurd Universal State the innocent may aspire to but never a statesman in his right mind, for every statesman must realize that, instead of occasional and reasonable competitors, he would have to deal with a dark legion of nihilists, a horde infinitely more mischievous and infinitely more desperate than any Golden Horde, any insolent Bolshevism, any petty Yellow Peril, any uppetyness of any color. The prudent despot, the enlightened democrat is a friend of particularisms, frontiers, language-barriers, folklores, etc.)

Cites are as much defined as they are delimited by their walls. Lacking an assailant, some enemy in the neighborhood, the prince must employ his own police to commit the indispensable depradations, else he will have no easy time of it persuading the people to repair the town's fortifications and to defend themselves. Self-defense is keeping fit, and the best offense as well. One city only is never menaced, only one population is absolutely secure: that city is inhabited by shades and Dis is its master.

But for the living a challenge is something one responds to. And challenges are welcome: they keep evoking responses, they keep the living quick. And so it is vain to enquire: Should books be banned? Indeed, they should, as a matter of course, in quantity, noisily, with display and to set an example. Things being as they are—men and societies and their works being eternally susceptible to going awry, eternally obliged to right and restore and renew themselves—, some books *must* be banned, just as some actions *must* be prohibited; and prizes may, indeed must be awarded to other books, just as deeds of exemplary civism must be acknowledged. Is it not indifferent books and faint hearts that pose the real threat to literature and to the city? No challenge then, no response. The edge, the sting, the nerve goes out of everything. Everything languishes, and over everything rises the star of nonsense. Not enough to nourish life, the pale wasted light it emits shows a general sepulchre. Indifference and disgust—there is the major problem. That is the corruption, the decadence you must not permit; in your fight against it, any means—any corrupt and any decadent means—is acceptable.

Provided that, from the point of view of our institutions and our laws, some books are harmful and some salutary, they continue to have their impact. Then only, attracting us, repelling us, do they communicate to us. Then only do they have any effect upon us: only while we are being acted upon, presented with vivid, and if need be, lurid contrasts, presented with choices and compelled to choose, only while things are fluid and the fatal balance in things short of struck, do we know where we stand or if indeed we are standing at all.

If the people will not heed murmurs and whispers, then have the poets scream.

5. *The sacrifice.*

(*Explain your point of view and then, rapidly, shift it.*)

And so, if I can appreciate the pride that swells up in a writer whose bestseller gets condensed in *The Reader's Digest* or picked to be The Book of the Month or printed in *Life* and read by millions, I can also imagine the jubilant feelings of some Marquis de Sade—an aristocrat, yes, but no less a citizen than our own Mr. A.J. Cronin or Mr. Lloyd Douglas or for that matter Mr. Hemingway or Squire Faulkner and as much concerned as they about love and God and truth and honor—whose book, chosen for burning, gets what it richly deserves.

Let us be clear about one thing: *I have in all this spoken from within the city. My attitude and my point of view are bourgeois. I am a legitimist. I am principally concerned for the rules.* As a bourgeois and as a legitimist I, like everyone else who dwells in the city, prefer categories to remain fixed, words to keep their meaning, old myths to stay in currency, old prejudices to totter on, and the rules to remain plain as day; ambiguity may becloud reality, but one asks only that one be given the new key when circumstances require that the lock be changed on the door. We wish to be able to come and go, we bourgeois, to be kept *au courant,* so that we can remain in a position to render our services.

Introducing *La Nouvelle Justine* to his readers, Maurice Blanchot begins this way:

> If there is a hell in libraries it is intended for such a work as this. No literature of any period contains one as scandalous, none has so profoundly wounded men's feelings and affronted men's received notions. Who today... would dare seriously compete with Sade's licentiousness? If we

> consider this the most outrageous of books, is that not sufficient motive for turning our attention to it? For here we have the opportunity to acquaint ourselves with a book beyond which no other writer, at any time, has ever been able to venture; in this so relative world of letters, we have, so to speak, a veritable absolute in our hands—and why is it we refrain from consulting it?... But could it be that the scandal owes its purity to uninterrupted neglect? When one thinks of the extraordinary precautions history has taken to make a prodigious enigma of Sade, when one thinks of his twenty-seven years' confined and interdicted existence in prison, when this sequestration is not only applied to a man but extended to his after-life, his progeny, to the point where the concealment of his writings seems still to condemn the living man to an eternal seclusion—then one finally wonders if the censors and judges who immure Sade do not act at Sade's behest, do not comply with the most ardent wishes of a libertine who always aspired to the solitude of the earth's entrails, to the mystery of a subterranean and recluse existence. Sade repeatedly maintained that man's greatest immoderations demand secrecy, the dark shadow of the lowest depths... A scandalous, scarcely approachable book-which among other things demonstrates that there is no scandal where there is first no respect, and that where the scandal is extraordinary the respect is extreme. Indeed, who is more highly esteemed than Sade?... Such respect is indeed a treasure for a literature and a civilization (1).

And literature and civilization do a better homage to Sade when (it matters not with what crying hypocrisy) they burn his books rather than when, prying the tooth from the wolf's jaw and shearing away the claws of the beast, they vulgarize—they domesticate, they trim down to common sense proportions, make ordinary and everyday—what is nothing if it does not strike a general terror.

Those are the rules I appeal to: the rules which, for the good of all concerned and above all for the good of the city, enjoin us to respect the irregular, the extraordinary and the divine.

6. *A bourgeois girl's "apotheosis".*

(The slick New Look. Has there been a miscarriage of "justice"? a violation of the rules?)

Here—in Paris, at a moment to be sure when we have plentiful evidence of weakness and the rules' decay, where your laundrywoman assures you of the nation's decadence, where, while its senators decide the fate of the Nation, its people are preoccupied with the outcome of the France-Wales rugby match —we have a book, *L'Histoire d'O* (2), which has both received a prize and kindled the displeasure of the authorities. As Jean Paulhan makes it plain in his preface, *O* is a "dangerous" book. It was published—discreetly—last year. Rumors began to circulate at once—and because those rumors belong to the public domain as much as the book itself does and by now so to speak form its dust-jacket, one may feel at liberty to repeat them. The author (or authoress; "Pauline Réage", Paulhan argues, can only be a woman) is still unknown. Had not *O*—according to rumor, at the instigation of M. Raymond Queneau—been granted the Prix des Deux Magots (3) in the early months of 1955, there would have been one of this publicity, hence none of this scandal, probably none of these (rumored) court proceedings, and surely none of these unusual sales, unusual for a novel priced at fifteen hundred francs. *L'Histoire d'O* has been translated into English: while not an exact counterpart of the original, *The Story of O* (4) is certainly no less (or more) "erotic" than the French version (or versions; according once again to rumor, there are several, with variant endings, and the printed French *O* offers a choice of two beginnings).

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(1) *Lautréamont et Sade.* Paris, Les Editions de Minuit, 1949.

(2) Jean-Jacques Pauvert Editeur, 1954.

So, despite this air and these accoutrements of an XVIIIth Century farce, a little mystery still cloaks *O,* and that is a blessing to count if one feels that clandestine novels properly belong underground. But accident has brought *O*—dangerous, erotic and banned—halfway into the open, has disturbed these perhaps not very securely arranged veils, and through the gaps in secrecy *O,* a little like M. Dides, appears neither one thing nor another—appears to belong half to one world, half to another and like many expressions or confessions of what I should choose to call bourgeois faith, to be trying a little nervously to make the best of them both.

A pleasant girl, O (who seems to be in her late twenties), meets her lover, René, at an appointed place, steps into a limousine (a Quinze Chevaux, one would say) and is taken cinematically for a ride. Enigmatically, René sits silently beside her after having bound and blindfolded O; as they drive along, he caresses her thigh or breast from time to time. She loves him; therefore "asks no questions". They finally arrive at an establishment, Roissy, which in many respects resembles the Castle of Silling in *Les 120 Journées:* a secluded, privileged place some miles outside Paris, where a group of unknown but wealthy men amuse themselves with women, or rather at their expense. René surrenders O to his colleagues or clients, a sinister company who abuse her, confuse her, humiliate her. She is whipped, whipped repeatedly and ferociously, sodomized, given an iron ring to wear on her finger, she is branded. A collar is fitted around her neck; to it may be fastened a leash and she is sometimes led about like a beast. Bracelets are fitted to her wrists; chains are attached to them when she is left for the night. And, most uncomfortable of all, a heavy steel link is, like an earring, inserted in a hole in each of her pierced labia; later, further links are attached to the first; the chains clank when O walks. O's Gothic martyrdom reminds us of Justine's. But O is a XXth Century girl, with shopping to do, Cinzano to drink at five o'clock, and a living to earn; a XXth Century girl, she is a far less reluctant (and perhaps less seductive) victim than Justine. And this faultless reasonableness, this busy week-day, this exotic week-end, these telephone calls, these high-compression automobile engines and this villa at Roissy and the other on the Mediterranean... this clinical, this surgical precision, this nickel-steel and this impeccable hygiene belong to no era but our own; and this implict understanding between doctor and patient that *it is all being done for the latter's own good* or *this hurts me more than it does you* has the ether smell of modern medicine and modern credulousness.

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(3) A prize of which no one seems to know much and of which nothing was ever heard until it was given in recognition of O to a woman who arrived for the ceremony wearing a mask. To further complicate this picture, another novel, this time entitled *S,* was on display the other day in a Saint-Germain-des-Prés bookshop window, and was advertised as having been given this year's Prix des Deux Magots.

(4) The Olympia Press, Paris, 1954.

In his preface to *O* as in his preface to *Les Infortunes de la Vertu* Paulhan explains that, subconsciously at least, women enjoy such treatment, and indeed only enjoy themselves if treated thus. Does O love René? then she is to prove it by obeyring him, for he—or rather his guide, Sir Stephen—knows best. Love becomes the equivalent of blind devotion, of quietly ecstatic servitude, of being used—used in the way a thing is used. O must cease to be a person; she must be invaded and maltreated until there is no person left to writhe and weep under violence. She consents, "freely consents", to be unfree, to be wholly possessed, and as time passes and her sufferings accumulate, she discovers the secret Paulhan believes Sade knew and which Saint Catherine of Sienna and Saint Theresa of Avila unquestionably knew: that, by nature, woman is essentially a victim. Thus, although withered by stripes (laid on with infinite compassion and remarkable force), O's spiritual nature rises like the morning star out of the fearful night of drubbings and mascerations her body is subjected to. The more a slave she becomes, the more liberated, the more serene, the happier she feels.

In another age, perhaps, this would have been a "sacred" book and O would have been a splendid prospect for canonization. In another age, this book would have been about a vocation; in this, it is a novel about a girl's education: the teaching is half pagan, half Christian, half mystic, half rational: O learns *the technique of happiness* (5). Rather, as a consequence of her experiences, than yearning for the impossible, O becomes better adjusted than ever to the possible, to the "real"—to the city, in this instance Paris, where she works as a fashion photographer. Apotheosis or no, O's judgment in matters of lighting subjects and calculating time exposures is not one bit impaired. For if there is a separation between the realms of the divine and the banal, a difference between ecstasy and routine, one supposes that to move from one to the other goes with a radical and fundamental change in a being's orientation; one supposes that there are no halfway measures; ambiguity in these matters is distasteful to us, for we instinctively feel the difference between work and play. Moreover, our entire community is based upon that difference and upon preserving the sharpest distinction between what ensures our survival and what imperils it.

But what of the masters, of René and Sir Stephen (those "lovers" to whom O dutifuly hands over the money she earns)? They are rationalist, indeed materialist *philosophes,* but also have that deliberate, absorbed air that bespeaks the priest. These mingled inclinations produce a certain abjection:

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(5) This technique seems to bear a relation to Sade's "apathy therapeutic".

the abjection of compromised faith. In part ascetic, in part mechanic, these masters require not the naked desert's infinite space and time for their operations, but the jungle of the modern city, or rather all the apparatus and harness a modern industry can provide. While one of them "had the bony, gaunt visage, the piercing look one sees in portraits of old Huguenots, and his hair was grey", they seem to dress with a Regent Street elegance and to feel at home on the Côte d'Azur. There is the steely Puritan side, to be sure; but the men of Roissy look as though they tired easily.

And what if they should eventually tire of inflicting cruelties upon the indefatiguable O? What if their hands ultimately weaken and, unable to support the burden imposed upon them by *their nature,* give up and fling away the lash? Or if they become bored? or disgusted? And that of course is what happens: little wonder that things run downhill in the second half of the book, that its organization wobbles, that the efforts of secondary characters, rushed in to stem or delay the inevitable, only precipitate the collapse; and that, unable to do much more *to* O, these masters of ordinary size and endurance, concealing their relief as best they can, "consent" that she die. What else is there for her to do? her teachers, her gods have deserted her. That dénouement is only implied in the novel, it is true; the end of the MS. was cut and one is left to conjecture about the events that separate the last printed scene from the last page, which is there: laconically: "Il existe une seconde fin à l'histoire d'O. C'est que se voyant sur le point d'être quittée par Sir Stephen, elle préféra mourir. Il y consentit." That seems reasonable enough.

As a matter of fact, everything is reasonable in *O*—and that is what is most unusual and most touching about Pauline Réage's book: here is a book that lies under the dual influence of reason and the erotic. The prose is even and cool, systematic, unerring and naive. O is calm. Her professors, at all times under considerable stress, are judicious, level-headed and correct. One has only to compare these after all very down-to-earth men (René fait figure d'un beau sportif, and a good part of Sir Stephen's strangeness can be explained by his language: O is French and Sir Stephen only speaks English) with Sade's heroes—or for that matter with any tragic hero of antique myths, or with any figure of romance, whether he be Sisyphus or Heathcliffe—and the point of the book is made: we no longer live in the Age of Faith. Nothing in *O* the match the monks of Saint Mary's in the Wood, or the four companions of Silling, those *rageurs;* the engineers in *O* are defeated shadows of the traditional libertine. While reading *O,* one is confronted not by the wonderful, the prodigious, but by the ordinary and the efficacious. Above all else, the men of Roissy appear to be *workers,* with their arduous but purposeful task to carry out. Their undertaking is joyless, but practical. No one *plays* in *O.* No one appears to have anything like a good time (nor indeed a bad time), not even O in her calvary of self-realization. Here, in these characters, is a definite kind of behaviour, a definite psychology, a definite pattern of needs and they differ in no important way from the behaviour and psychology and needs one finds in a thousand modern novels no one would dream of calling erotic. This is civilized behaviour and the attitudes in *O* are attitudes we all of us can share without trespassing against the rules and without seriously endangering the foundations of the city.

But is this "going too far?" Perhaps it is; perhaps "things have not yet reached that point". It all rather depends upon one's analysis of the ground we have covered and of the forces that have brought us this far and in all likelihood will take us yet further. It may be remarked that if indeed the attitudes and behaviour set forth or implied in *O* have received the entry-visa into the city, our plight is worse than had been suspected and that it is no longer a question of speculating upon "the decline of the West", but of acknowledging a state of acute dilapidation "somewhat akin to that of an old and worn-out whore". But, again, degradation and prostration—which need not be the end of the journey—may comprise one of the stages in our adventure.

7. *Vulgarity and the divine.*

(*You have nothing to fear from making false interpretations; not much either to gain from making true ones. Above truth and falsehood, dominating them, is the feeling that no news is good news. And the bearers of evil tidings can only expect to hold parley with the hangman. O little master! if the gods themselves stand helpless before stupidity, what are you to do in the face of vulgarity?*)

Is it not true that, more often than not, these painful researches into the meaning of vulgarity end in nonsense, in meaninglessness? and nonsense is that one lord the vulgar serve well. What the vulgar embrace withers into ashes. The sky is empty above a vulgar man's head, he treads in mud always, has a soul of mud and is safe; whereas nothing is safe from his touch, he has but to lay a finger for one fleeting instant down upon silver and lo! 'tis lead. Wherever he goes, this magician makes a wasteland and where he passes even, I fancy, the stones ache, astonished and sad.

In his article "On Vulgarity" (6), Albert Dasnoy cites the reponse of a politician: "'What seems to me the basic characteristic of the vulgar man is that he is incapable of respect.'" Vulgarity, says Dasnoy, "is self-assertive, self-confident, and self-defensive... Yet sometimes it is accompanied by such utter complacency that its aggressiveness is lost in the display of an imperturbable self-possession." But vulgarity is not, contrary to the vulgar supposition, something that belongs either to the simple or to the primitive: "'It's the misfortune of being civilized,'" the author was told by a European doctor who had dwelt and toiled some years in the Congo. "They may be brutal or bestial; yet, even at their lowest, one never encounters a certain incurable, hereditary degradation of feature and bearing. 'The reason... is that, among them, there is no such thing as a stunted spiritual vocation. Our own particular ugliness is nothing else but that.'" And further: "...anything which is genuinely primitive is neither vulgar nor even susceptible to vulgarity...

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(6) *Encounter* No. 17 (February 1955).

vulgarity is a consequence of rationalism"—perhaps also of "realism" and of "relativism": of a conviction that man can, if he puts his mind and arm to it, "control" nature. "If we are unwilling to accept any human manifestation that is not completely free from vulgarity, we should have to confine ourselves to what man has been, and to what he has made, under the influence of the sacred."

Sacred? What revolution will be needed to restore the meaning to that word? There were, for example, Aztecs. They lived in a place where life was difficult and unsure. There was the hurricane, the wind. In addition, there was fire: the volcano. The earth could be hostile: there were quakes. And there were floods, or droughts. Control over natural forces was beyond man's powers; gods, sometimes hostile, sometimes well-disposed, determined the possibilities of life. In return for the gift of life, men made sacrifices, giving to the *sacred* what was most precious to man: human lives: and human lives were *sacred*.

The erotic—the procreative, the creative, the life-assuring—depends, finally, upon the sacred: the erotic experience, the erotic novel make no sense whatever, indeed turn to nonsense, if the participant or the reader does not ***value*** the erotic above all else: and there can be no erotic situation or book unless all else is set aside, beheld as of secondary if of any importance, subordinated to a sovereign and thus sacred principle. Disaster and parody and bareness inevitably follow upon any compromise.

(*And if there is any misery, any profound misery, it is to be unable to achieve this intensity, this abandon, this transfiguration; it is of this the godless and the vulgar deprive themselves when they purchase an immunity from a certain suffering, a certain anguish.*)

Our great problem.

These few paragraphs, as well as any other I know, very fitly describe the problem almost anyone who can afford it is apt to find himself faced with today:

> THE BATHROOM—OUR REFUGE FROM STRESS
>
> Stress is the daily killer that must daily be met. It murders sleep. It murders thought. It murders health. It attacks the body and destroys its defenses. It is the greatest problem of our time.
>
> That is why we so greatly emphasize the bathroom in these pages:
>
> For the bathroom is where you can best meet stress. It is the place in the home with the least pressure on you. It is where you can reduce the tension between the world and yourself.
>
> It is the entrance hall to a peaceful sleep. It is the sanctuary for the body, the inviolate home of the defenseless, the first and last refuge for the naked self.
>
> It puts you at ease with everyone and everyone with you, for the whole world is at ease with you when you are at ease with yourself. It is the confidante of all your confidences, a private place for preparing yourself for public places.
>
> And we greatly emphasize the bath in the bathroom:
>
> For it cradles you and babies you, where the shower scolds you and spurs you. It is a sedative, a sensual luxury, where the shower is a rude awakener, a Puritan rebuke, a pressing reminder. It supports you and protects you,

> where the shower needles you. It prepares you for bed, where the other prepares you for battle. It lifts your cares, the shower girds your loins. One is for night and sweet sleep, the other for day and the day's stress (7).

And there come next six or ten pages of photographs in color—representing a selection of bathrooms that fairly bring tears to one's eyes and are enough to unstring even the rudest knees. Bathrooms with "fittings hand-formed in brass or gold plate", ceramic basins, monogrammed appurtenances, "smooth-flowing mosaics", "confidently mixed heirloom crystal and overlay with modern marble".

This is comfort—who today can deny it?—, this is wellbeing, the life positively of the gods; and were there gods today, they would positively sicken with envy or, rubbing their eyes, demand to know whether it were real. And the proud, defiant answer to their disbelief would be: There is nothing more real in our city. Earthquake, storm, fire, flood are less real than this; cobalt weapons are less real than this; the massacre of sixty million persons in the event of a hydrogen raid on, say, the United States is less real than this; life and death are less real than this; we ourselves are less real than this.

It is not my intention to hurt anyone's feelings; nor to hint that the common man has a bathroom like these or that they who live graciously and do are worshipping false idols. This mild euphoria, this voluptuous oblivion ensured by this prophylactic luxury, so easy to ridicule and because so ridiculous so poignant, are but means of getting along in a contemporary maelstrom, a free-for-all in which anything is permitted. In the absence of a living "Church", the bathroom may perfectly well serve as a chapel.

(*At this juncture say something or other about the past. History is done, dead and safe. Readers, who would as soon have done for good and for all with humankind rather than hear anymore about the present, are there to be amused.*)

A friend of mine—his name is Hunt, I have not seen him in five years and if I live today in Paris it is because he counseled me to try it—who had been brought up in the wilderness—in Oklahoma, first in a one-room house of stone nailed in the center of nowhere under a sky I have seen and which I know is made of stainless steel, flat like armorplate over a disk of clay baked as hard as some dull tessera in a figuration of nowhere; and afterwards in another house nailed at a crossroads, where two highways straight as certain madness interslash at right angles to form a pinpoint of absurdity marked by stopsigns and a single gasoline pump with its handle and an empty reservoir—; a friend of mine, I say, used to tell me stories of tribes of Oklahoma Indians and of their extinction. For in those days Hunt and I hard a common interest in this business of extinction and annihilation. We were graduate students at a prairie university in another state. There was a beaux arts faculty, a building where lots of youngsters painted for credit and, eventually, for diplomas; on that building was a legend scooped in a rectangle of Portland cement: ARS LONGA, VITA BREVA EST. Hunt and I listened to lectures for a week or two then both decided that we were overdoing it, this frenzied acquisition of learning, and decided also to see whether there was not some possibility of earning money in that town, which happened to call itself "the Athens of the Midwest". We got a morning job with a plumber; we raked muck out of hundreds of pipes; we even did an extensive installation in a rendering factory; and up to our chins in filth, or digging those six-foot deep trenches to lay sewage lines in, we'd chat about the probable length of this life. And Hunt would tell me about the Indians.

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(7) *House Beautiful*, March 1955.

He knew Osage. It was not just the language but the music you had to learn: that is to say, before speaking, an Indian would have first to order what he wished to try to communicate and this meant composing a speech and, to go with it, a song. The song came from the gods and prayer was required before the gods could be induced to surrender the music and the words; angry gods could thus, by witholding music, prevent a man from speaking at all, at least from being understood. And silence had more and more been imposed upon the tribes, above all the Osage. They were dying out. Observing the success everywhere of the white men—of creatures the Indians took to be merchants and hence slaves—and the disappearance of sacred wild game, the Osage had presumed that for some unknown reason (all reasons are unknown) the gods had withdrawn their favor. Prayer and sacrifice changed nothing. Decades passed. It went from bad to worse. And so the Osage had refrained from reproducing their kind and were becoming fewer and fewer, yes, fewer and fewer, and would soon vanish altogether—not because of apathy or disease but because of respect for what is divine. What we wondered on those fine brisk mornings, driving through the cornfields or lying in that soap-making factory amidst the carnage and in that transcending stench, was whether we others, the slaves, would be able to do as well, with similar dignity, firmness, solemn devotion. Were we ever to be placed in similar circumstances.

My object in these considerations is not to add one more description to that Alexandrian library containing twilight memoirs; but to make a step towards determining what kind of place the erotic has in our city. I would contend that where the one is secure the other will survive. To my mind, the fates of the erotic and religious and musical moments are inseparably joined; the triumph of vulgarity—of the merchants and the slaves—is the ruin of all three. We may not be the dupes of taciturn Osage spirits, we may not have to respect their obscure will; but where the power to respect is fading or absent, the power to create, the power to be is dying or dead, there is neither power nor glory.

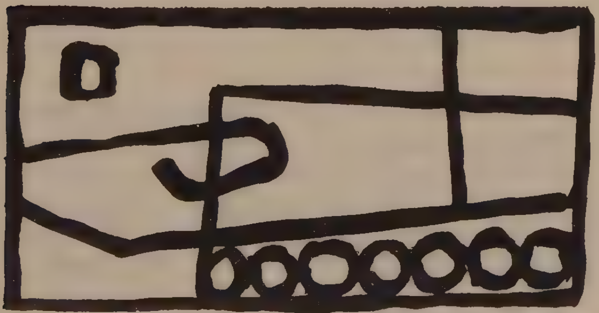
In other terms: if they neither love you nor hate you, neither fear nor adore you, if they cannot dance on the day of festival, if they lie indifferently under the lash, if the sun is night, then take with you bread and wine, saddle your ass, leave them and ride out of the desert.

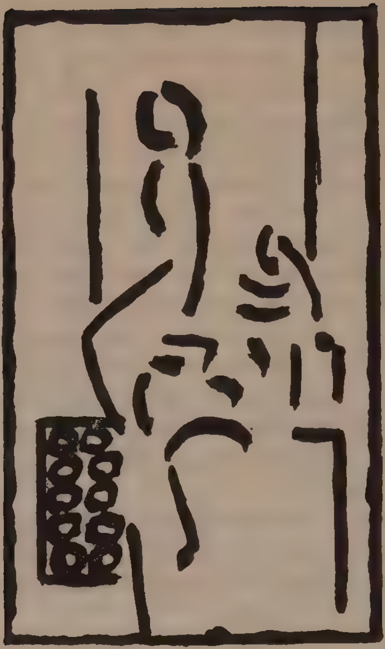
In still others: Do you wish to save them? Then extol the erotic: respect for the one is respect for the other. Ignore the blasé, let perish the jaded; there may be others who will listen. Censors and policemen, parsons and prophets, housewives and shopgirls and very young girls and young boys respect the erotic—all those dreaming, distracted, desiring, all those hard-working, self-respecting people who respect the law, the law which may now and again ban and burn "dangerous" books, the books which are written above all else to inspire a strong reaction. They challenge; these people respond, sometimes by delectation, sometimes by indignation; but whatever may be the form their reaction takes, it is plain, decisive and alive. The function of vulgar books is to placate, to smooth out the wrinkles, relax the muscles, eliminate sharp edges, calm ragged nerves; of erotic books to shake the reader to the roots, to remind him he has roots, to make the blind see, to make him tremble with terror and shudder with desire, to stir him and, showing him he is capable of being stirred, show him, as best he as an individual person can be shown, what lies beckoning to him from beyond the everyday, the forty-hour week and the social security retirement plan, from beyond the regular rhythms and perspectives of the ordinary world and the ordinary moments of his life. The vulgar settle for very little, and very little is their lot: limbo belongs to them: they aspire to no heaven and are not much fit for any hell.

It is not fair to reduce a novel to what one judges it is a symptom of. Without being a splendid book, *O* is perhaps an admirable one, surely an intelligent one and rather than being indifferent has moved me to talk about indifference. *O* contains no surprises.

I regret this: that in this suburban "forbidden" book there is no vision of evil, no breath of revolt, scarcely a syllable of blasphemy, no essential outrage and nothing of the sacred I can recognize—no fire to sear the flesh or affright the soul, no fire in it to marry the flames of the pyre burning on the public square or to brighten the watch's beacon glowing on the beloved city's ramparts.

(*But to ask for all those things is simply my own way of being unjust.*)





Pheidippides

Cleveland Moffett

for Lil

> *The world's record for the pianoplaying marathon is 611 hours and 23 minutes established in 1936 by the Austrian, Adolph Mut. This is subsequently disputed and an 'official' contest held and upheld... and in turn disputed and a subsequent one made even more official elsewhere, until there is scarcely a community not proclaiming* its *contestant* the *official recordholder.*
>
> *We, on the other hand, can clearly recognize these fallacious circumstances and do determine to produce the one final, authoritative and incontestable contest.*
>
> Old Clipping

Six peaked and disheveled chickens dyed green and tied eight inches apart at the necks with orange ribbon, each bearing a sandwich-sign with a capital letter on either side of it, fluttered out-of-step through the streets. Until they began to get too much in the way. Besides, after somebody had snatched one of the end ones they no longer spelled out the tavernkeeper's name, so he might as well cart them off anyway. Attention had been attracted through; that was all that mattered.

Somebody was saying how he always said it wasn't the Mayor that made the town.

The piano was a battered upright—just barely—that had been upstairs about to fall through the ceiling, so they decided to bring it down on the floor. The 'who's to play it' became Kral. (There had been another candidate but the waiter cracked this one's little finger by being careless setting down a beermug, and Kral was elected unanimously enough.)

In any case, one minute there was a loud long toast and the next minute it had begun. *He had*. Kral struck off a quick-time tune and the tavernkeeper and the waiter danced a jig. That afternoon the customers hung around and upon the piano naming what they wanted to hear. Kral knew them and played them all. So he ambled by the evening and he leisured through the night and into the following morning where he was met with tankards of coffee dark and a hearty breakfast.

Time was only conjecture at best. To keep people from staring in the windows who would not come in and buy anything, the windows had to be shuttered over and curtained. This kept daylight from mooching as well, so that inside time went by halves like a clock—the world couldn't get halfway revolved before it had to start back all over again. The room was hardly illuminated from the few wide greenshaded lamps suspending over the billiard-tables and the players and the secondguessers that in this glum rembrandtian murk were medical students surrounding an operatingtable and hearing the clicking sounds of forceps or billiardballs and taking some kind of Anatomy Lesson.

The waiter entertained himself by prying one key off the keyboard with a canopener for each day (having access to daylight, he measured by 24's) of the marathon and then sitting on a barstool to carve the date in the ivory with a corkscrew. Every day he put pencillead in the white graffiti or cuechalk in the black, cemented another key to one end of the bar, all lined up in simulation of a piano. Kral told him that if he must, to begin at the treble end because they were the most disagreeably cheerful notes, while the grumpy bass commiserated, dourly soothing. As his tinkle took to clanking and his ripple started to rumple, playing the piano soon enough ceased to amuse Kral, and so did watching the dartthrowers and the earnest dissectionists over the green tables. Some customer was usually willing to play a game of checkers with him and always able to win—one hand behind his back...

Those first few days were the worst, until a demisemiconscious drowse eased into him and allowed his movements to operate almost involuntarily. Kral felt he would be able to endure in this state of lethargy for a month or a winter or an ever. There was no more sensation whatever of exertion. Or if there was, that inevitable difficulty was resolved by placing a large porcelain thundermug on a low stool beside him, so that he could easily move himself over a foot or more and evacuate.

By the end of the week with time enough there were men enough who came to crowd the place for several hours at a time. The smoke then lay in a deep stratum against the ceiling. Never was he left entirely alone. There was probably some kind of rule about this, although rules were few and vague or for the most improvised as disagreements arose. Occasionally and fortunately these did arise to stir the air in violent ventilation of opinion and smoke. First there was a bet and then sides were taken and finally an opinion or two made up.

At this point, when Kral appeared to have shifted off into a full trance condition, it was loudly contended by the one group that to sleep while playing was unfair, or at least contrary to some rule or other they were busy devising. The other group of bettors, gleeful to have something to be against, quickly go into it with a barrage of various NOes and YESes. According to the latter, the point was to play and that to play while sleeping or eating or eliminating was perfectly irrelevant and legitimate.

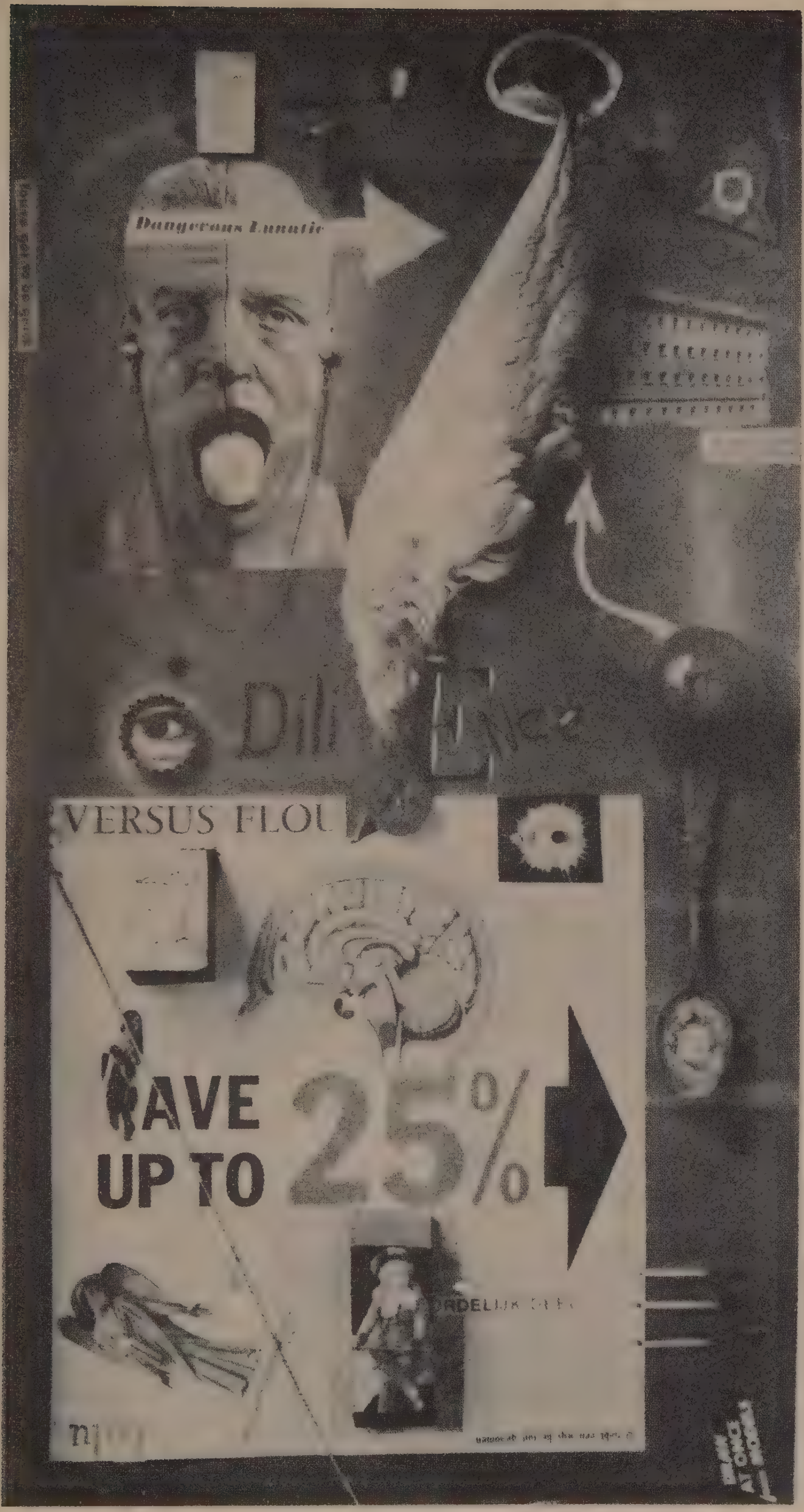
At once the argument grew as thick as cigarsmoke, and the pianoplayer himself was ignored altogether. One side-issue that seemed not to occur to either camp or else had already been dismissed at a previous meeting, was: an objection to the playing itself which had by now disintegrated into a fumbling noise. It might well have been defended that this was no longer 'playing the piano' at all— But supposedly the idea was that a runner may lose his grace and form near the end of the race so that technically it could be said this was stumbling, yet the man is nevertheless, one way or another, still *in the running,* and that is what counts...

The main controversy roared on. A lumpy man who had been there the longest, sitting backwards in his chair, drinking continually and wrangling at intervals, as if he were marathoning too as a spectator, got up to blare,

"*I* say if he's going to sleep all through it you could just as well hypnotize him, couldn't you? and let him play till he dies of old age. People that get sleeping sickness you know sleep twenty thirty *forty* years like it was a nap. There was a girl just a young kid I used to know her and she went to bed one night just like every night in the week she went to sleep and by the time you could say Rip Van Winkle ten million times she woke up one morning fresh like any other morning and when she got one good look at herself all what seemed like in a sudden wrinkled up and grey why she about went screaming crazy right then. After that she was too scared to go to bed anymore. Well they say that was hypnotizing. They said there was a footman in love with her but she."

The official contest doctor who always said he read people not books listened and indexed. He broke in officially,

"That's right, now take my wife used to go somnambulating all over the house till I went and shot her in the ribs one night for a burglar. After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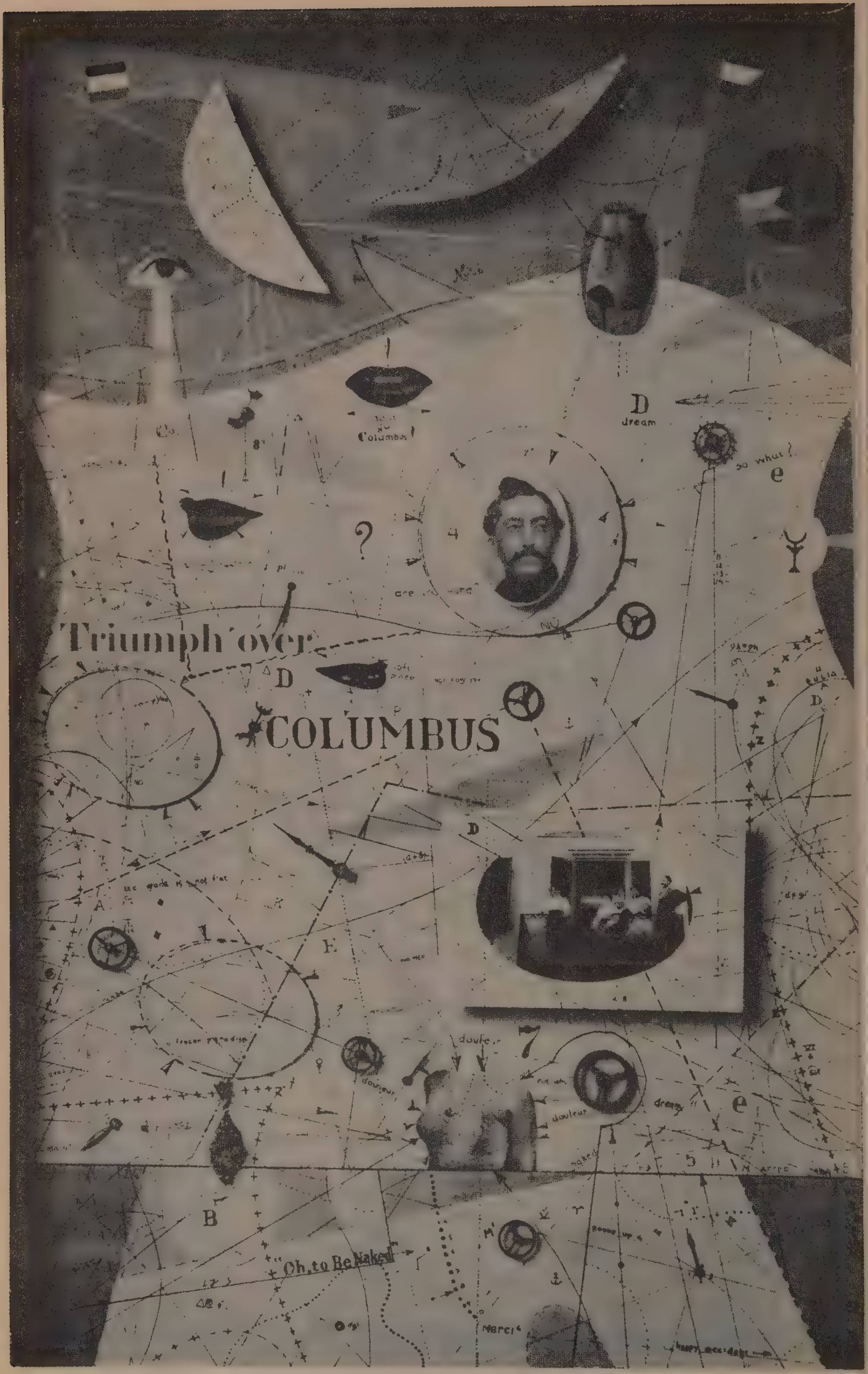
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that there was no more trouble that way. Have to shock it out of them," contributed the doctor.

An unhelpful youth who had to have red hair started in sarcastically,

"Why don't we lay him out on a nice soft bed and let him paddle the keys with his naked feet, ey? We might as well, why don't we?"

until this was cut short by the twenty spokesmen for the opposition who shouted someting like,

"If he can play *and* sleep I mean together that's his talent—an ace—or a doublejointed wrestler—can you outlaw him for that?—unfair advantage?—what about eightfoot basketball players?—"

Somebody said what about them and called all *this* 'irrelevant' likewise. Another, who only chewed the inside of his cheek inattentively, rejoined safely,

"What's *that* got to do with *this?* It's not fishing to sleep with a line tied on to your big toe, is it? *And.*"

This continued at long length, and while the debaters fumed, the grey ceiling descended relentlessly upon them. Until: everything was disrupted by a man from the anti-sleepist corner who had been unable to join in and express himself because of a speech defect and got angry and stamped over to the piano to the entranced Kral and landed a great wallop on the nape of his neck that shook him quite wide awake again.

"Nnn! now pl'ay!" he managed to stutter. His flying arms made the smoke loll sluggishly.

This rapid settlement of the whole matter turned both sides, in disappointment, quietly back to their unfathomable beakers.

On Sunday morning a dark man from one of the local religions came to call and 'performed' something and left.

On Monday a man with a machine of some kind put it down beside the piano for a while, picked it up and went out.

On Tuesday the tavernkeeper known as the Proprietor marched in leading two men, one of them the photographer again, and the other somebody dressed all in white from shirt to shoes who ought to be a doctor—but from what kind of hospital? He was not, this one was a barber and a Greek. His steps were two to the Proprietor's one, causing the lather to slosh from a big white basin he carried held out in front of himself.

"Just keep right on playing there, Kral," the Proprietor commanded the pianoplayer with his voice and the barber with a gesture—while the photographer with his authoritative apparatus himself commanded respect.

Plop! he got a slap of hot towel in the face and the Greek barber was brandishing a gleaming weapon at him.

"Smile!" he heard. The place flared up in magnesium light and he couldn't see a thing for ten minutes. For a while it sounded as if the barber were saying something. Just to make sure, he listened.

"Pheidippides was a furious man like you but more. He was a runner and any more than you do he did not want to stop. He got on his legs like any man a horse's and ran the way from Athens to Sparta. Then Sparta is having troubles with the moon, they believe her, and cannot come. Pheidippides is more spartan than Spartans. Good news or evil is the same, he runs. How?"

The barber's hand steadied Kral's head better than he now could himself. The expert hand pulled the skin taut and swung the blade down against it fast and precise.

"You must not know how. That is the work for somebody other, for example Miltiades. Go! Fly, Pheidippides, he orders, and say Xairete nikomen (*), don't forget!

"The road was lone. Nobody would see him stop on the road. He could stop to breathe or drink if he needed to and wanted to and he did, but he never did. Was it for the great fight and his brothers soldiers and his Athens and grand Miltiades because he was running? There are many men with also great desires but they could not be able to do this way. Was it for being a hero, for a celebration for him? No, he stopped before he would be dead if this is true. No. He ran with his heart together—he used rhythm like you The heart pum pum pum pum the feet cannot believe the heart pum pum."

A few more times the photographer took aim and stung him in the eyes and then for a while, as far as he could tell, he was entirely alone. The shave left a burn in his skin.

There was somebody pounding on the door and bellowing at it. It sounded like his aunt. He knew what she was doing here.—No women allowed. —Reluctantly the commotion outside subsided and Kral had to hear crumbling chunks of chords from the piano as his inarticulate fingers clutched at the keyboard. It felt as if the sound was withering his ears and would soon turn them black. My ears are magnolias only zephyrs perfumes and dews are fit to touch lovely magnolia ears. A girl who. Or was it a poem? So he tore the corner off a piece of sheetmusic, wadded it up and screwed it into one ear. The same for the other ear and by playing softly he could almost hear nothing.—Nothing.—A vivid vision of Pheidippides the Runner goading himself on like a schizophrenic centaur. Pan the God beckoning from an Arcadian dell, promising surecure, Panic will rout any enemy. I must be in Sparta in two days—oh how far greater is the distance from now to then than from here to there! His feet in his shoes like hammers in his hands. No one could have resented his meritorious thirst or begrudged him a breath he did not have to rend his lungs for. Except Pheidippides himself. When'll he stop? Noon. No. On! I'll only have time when I run out of distance. Tree shadows rock shadows constant sundials as he passes and his own apace for all his speed overpasses him. Distance was time. Pum pum pum xairete.

This time he did not wake up until the bridge of his nose whacked the edge of the pianotop and the place was doused in blood. He looked up at nobody around. He hollered out loud as he could—he didn't know how loud

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(*) "Rejoice! We have won." I have preferred Browning to Herodotus in this, as do, inadvertently I dare say, not a few old cyclopedias. Poetry before history. Nor will Pheidippides' orthography concur with J.B. Bury.

that was but nothing happened. His hands dropped off the piano and a door collapsed before a gang of seven or eight horrifiedlooking men. His hands climbed up onto the piano again and the men, greatly relieved, came up and saw all the blood. What was the matter? what was he trying to do? He unstoppered his ears and stuck the wads in his pocket. Couldn't they see? How was he supposed to know?

They cleaned him up the best they could and he looked terrible. This called for a joke.

"Hasn't she learned to play by herself yet, Kral?"

"Stick a nickle in her."

One of them offered to go get some clean clothes for him, did, and three of them unbuttoned and unbelted him, caught him at the armpits and kicked over the chair while another grabbed him by the ankles and dragged his legs out behind him and his pants off by the cuffs—they grappled as if they were trying to operate without gas. At last they got him shaped back into a chair again and set him down temporarily on somebody on allfours for the purpose until the chair was shoved into place once more. This was the same ritual that had been originated for washing him—when they sponged him off a little sometimes.

On Wednesday the official doctor came to take his pulse and place that cold metal disk here against his skin and there. He tsked once and left.

"I seen a guy one time was an Indian fellow from India you know they had him in a big box with windows in it. A guy was yelling out about how they never give him nothing to eat. Made me pay a quarter. Made me feel like a bigger fool than he was then."

On Thursday two men came in to see to it he swore the only way he kept going was on their brand of cigars. They slapped his shoulders, stuffed his pockets and never came back.

On Friday a bunch of ladies tried to get in, couldn't, and shrieked "He'll kill himself!" from the door until it was politely shut on them.

"No telling what sort of society for the prevention of what they're members of," muttered the Proprietor and he looked only a little bit bothered.

"How many days is it anyway?" he asked the waiter.

The waiter looked over the incompleted keys fastened to the bar, and replied hesitantly,

"I'm not sure. I'm afraid I lost count somewhere after you started skipping pages on the calendar."

"Well at any rate I suppose we might just as well call it a record now and be satisfied. Whatever it is, it's official."

It was no time before everyone in the community knew of Kral's triumph and hurried down to the tavern just to 'let's go see'. When they found him still at the piano crumpled against it, thumping one arm feebly on the keyboard and droning a senseless dirge through his teeth, the whole mob rushed in on him shouting and hurrahing joyfully and hauled him away from the piano and threw him up on their shoulders, cheering laughing parading out into the streets with him. Out into the sharp and painful sunshine hoisted high on the bony shoulders of the lads who carried him aloft like a flag 'tattered-but-true' amid the shouting aloud and flying kisses—everything was celebrating as if it were its own birthday—happy bandanas and flowers crazy with color.

"But a pretty damn *good* stunt though!" the Proprietor exulted, looking over the crowds pouring in and out of his tavern.

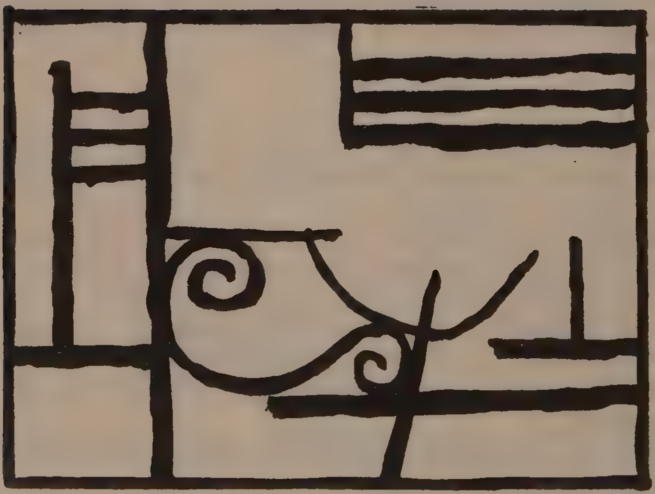
(In the midst of all this a youth who had evidently come running a long distance for a long time forced his way through the mob, looking as if he had to announce something, so someone punched him abruptly in the ribs and, exhausted anyhow, he fell flat on the ground.)

What with all that din nobody could hear Kral's slumped figure peacefully snoring.

"Atta boy," said the Proprietor.

"Smile!" said the Photographer.

"*Xairete,*" said the Barber, "*nikomen.*"



CHRONICLES

France as seen by the Germans (1)

Alain Clément

In undertaking an analysis of post-war Germany it would be a fallacy to suppose that, with the use alone of some common sense logic, the many pieces of a complex and puzzling picture can be satisfactorily fitted together. Side by side with easily recognizable former traits that have survived from yesterday, are new, unprecedented and, one feels one may predict, decisive phenomena. The Germany of 1954 reveals *something different:* there has been *some* change, not simply since 1945—even though the ground covered in the last nine years is a constant source of amazement for tourists and journalists—, but also with respect to the Germany of twenty or thirty years ago. Truism that this may be, not everyone is willing to accept it as an unchallengeable certainty. The facts it submits may be countered by others and they will seem all the more conclusive if they are the ones that relate to a generally known—or supposedly known—reality: a classified, fully documented, thoroughly explored Germany, unalterable in its perversity, recidivist and irredeemable. With the weight of accusation one may overwhelm the evidence of this new reality which has not yet taken definite form, which rather than emerging from the older reality, lies next its edge, and which forbids an exhaustive formulation. One need but begin to agree to discuss the matter in these terms and one sinks directly to the plane of vulgar Manichaeism, juggles "good" and "bad" symptoms, and finally for the solution to the equation summons in some mysterious power which would account for everything and explain nothing.

The Germans themselves would be hard put to say in *just what way* they have changed. Nor ought their perplexity to surprise us. It takes something more than a decade for millions of people to come to grips with, overcome and assimilate a half-century of rending upheavals; if there is to be an awareness of this history, it has got to come about through a gradual and concentric silting down of the truth. The moment has not yet arrived for the writing of anything beyond a perpetually tentative introduction and some few roughly sketched chapters of a study dealing with "the Germans as seen by themselves." But, skirting the central issue, at its edges one may detect the most outstanding alterations in the older ways of perceiving and thinking: and one may approach the question by considering the relation Germans have, not to themselves, but to other countries, other peoples.

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(1) From Critique No. 93 (February 1955). The books under particular consideration:

- Ernst Robert Curtius, *Französischer Geist im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert* (Franke. Bern, 1952. 527 pps.).
- Friedrich Sieburg, *Gott in Frankreich* (Societäts-Verlag. Frankfort-am-Main, 1954. 358 pps.).
- Karl Epting, *Generation der Mitte* (Universitätsbuchdruckerei. Bonn, 1953, 242 pps.).
- Herbert Lüthy, *Frankreichs Uhren gehen anders* (Europa-Verlag. Zürich, Stuttgart, 1954. 355 pps.).
- Heinz Otto Sieburg, *Deutschland und Frankreich in der Geschichtsschreibung des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Franz-Steiner. Wiesbaden, 1954. 340 pps.).
- Polly Maria Höffler, *André und Ursula* (Umschau-Verlag. Frankfort-am-Main, 1948. 330 pps.).

The point of making a "spectral analysis" of the books on France that have lately appeared in Germany would be to shed some light upon what has resulted from the change and upon what attitudes have been carried over from the past. Many have been; their abundance can be accounted for: in the past, the attraction exerted upon Germany by France was always powerful and France's interest in Germany is still great today. But we might also remember that however much Germany has been attracted by France, this attraction, practically speaking, has brought about and evoked next to nothing: France has exported Comte's philosophy to Brazil and Hugo-worship to Indochina, but has never succeeded in getting Racine or Chateaubriand securely planted on the other side of the Rhine. This neglect has caused misunderstandings; we are perhaps most wrong in assigning to culture the rôle of harmonizing civilizations and bringing them nearer together.

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It has been now and then suspected that post-1945 France secretly wishes to hear no more about Germany. On the other hand, Adenauer's Germany talks a great deal about France. France's politics and policies are lengthily discussed, her latest writings translated (2), her theatre, films and ballet admired more than ever, but very little is written about her. French as a language, French studies are on the downgrade. One ought doubtless to point out that in the universities these do not form a distinct discipline as have Germanic studies since 1902 in France. *Romanistik* embraces the entire Latin heritage—French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Provençal—and maintains its center of gravity in philology. Arid though it may be, the latter does not merit the reputation for sterility commonly given it. A work such as Eugen Lerch's *Französische Sprache und Wesensart* (3), by way of learned considerations upon the development of French grammar, shows the way to and confirms the poet Gottfried Benn's intuitive comments upon the self-willed rigor of French prose (4). Nevertheless, it is true that German scholarship, however vast, remains circumscribed by *Romanistik* and its philological traditions and continues to keep a controlling leash upon researches oriented towards French civilization and letters. When its professors yield to their predilections, they most often train their attention upon Italy and Spain. Contemporary Germany offers no equivalent of the major doctoral theses on German subjects presented in France in the course of the past ten years: one thinks of Suzini on Franz von Baader or Claude David on Stefan George. E.R. Curtius is the exception to the rule and himself tells us with what scandalized eyes his colleagues viewed this untoward deviation: a young professor who at the start of his career turned to modern French literature without first having sacrificed long years to obscure, tedious academic exercizes, shocked his elders and was, according to one of his censors, thought "rather on the frivolous side."

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(2) The review Das Buch (*Zeitschrift für Literatur, Kultur und Wissenschaft*, published by the Direction des Affaires culturelles of the French HICOG) in its special issue XI/XII 1951 and a later supplement, catalogues up until December 1952 more than 2000 translations that have appeared in both West and East Germany. Since then the tide has slackened. The tendencies this bibliography reveals, the fluctuations which affect them, are from time to time analyzed in the excellent review *Allemagne aujourd'hui* (Presses Universitaires). It goes without saying that the size of a body of translations does not perforce indicate the weight or thrust of an exerted influence, as prove German Catholicism's wholesale borrowings from French Catholic literature—from which only the most obvious and the least important elements have been selected for emulation.

(3) Diesterweg Verlag, Frankfort-am-Main, 1933.

(4) In *Ausdruckswelt* (2nd edition, 1954, Limes Verlag, Wiesbaden), notably in the chapter entitled "Franzose": "Balzac might be called the greatest Frenchman, Pascal France's greatest genius—these two and the somber Flaubert, the XIXth Century lyric poets and the Impressionists: that is France. Study those visages and in them all one will find an extraordinary severity, the lines and features of the moralist in the two senses of the humanist and the rigorous dialectician, one will find discipline of expression, of inexorable form, nothing weak, nothing lax—nothing of the dissoluteness the average German considers especially French—shows in those faces. They are austere, tough. Reflected there are France's abysses, her crises, her insoluble antinomies; these men are in the most fundamental way metaphysicians—quite as authentically so as German metaphysicians, but these French conduct their enquiries with less prolixity and less untidy rumination... These French, they form the most conscious, the most conscientious of nations; without making the least concession to facility, they balance content and expression, they are greater laborers at the mind's tasks than are the Germans who spread their moods and enthusiasms like jam over their literary buttered buns (*die sich aus Gesinnung und Schwung ihre literarischen Schmaltzstullen schmieren*)."

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The non-imaginative works we are concerned with—apart from Heinz Otto Sieburg's essay in comparative historiography and Herbert Lüthy's book, written in Paris under the plainly noticeable influence of the Parisian climate, and written furthermore by a Swiss—were for the most part either conceived or composed prior to the collapse of the Third Reich. And so it is not surprising that out of the group which we have selected the most important are two reprintings: *Gott in Frankreich* by Friedrich Sieburg, uncle of the Sieburg we mentioned a moment ago, and E.R. Curtius' collection of essays, some of them first published a good number of years ago, dealing with certain of France's greatest XXth Century writers. As both books are accompanied by a new preface —or postscript in the case of Curtius—in which the author enquires into the reception and fate his book may encounter, and enquires also into his own experience, and as these two names reigned in co-sovereignty over the field of Franco-German intellectual relations during the between-wars period, their reflections have a direct bearing upon what these relations used to be, and also upon what they may become later.

Französischer Geist im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert (*The French Spirit in the XXth Century*) contains texts on Gide, Romain Rolland, Claudel, Péguy, published in 1919 in *Wegbereiter das neuen Frankreich* (*The Literary Pioneers of the New France*) and studies on Proust, Valéry, Larbaud, culled from what made up *The French Spirit in the New Europe* which dates from 1925. The 1954 title is more laconic, even a little morose. Curtius has abandoned the adjective *new* he earlier used to qualify France and Europe. This is no chance deletion: it betokens a disenchantment Curtius, in a tone of serene sincerity, discusses in his *Rückblick 1952. The Literary Pioneers* was conceived towards 1910 in the atmosphere of a Strasbourg which, at the time, was a sanctuary of liberalism and culture midway between a Reich and a Republic then outbidding each other in nationalist and obscurantist rivalry. At that moment Franco-German *rapprochement* was no occasion for sentimental tirades or opportunistic sophistries: at Strasbourg it existed, was lived, was practiced on the highest level in the intimate fusion of two cultures. Intimate? Upon reconsideration one hesitates to use the word. The frontier between minds was abolished, but a division persisted between temperaments. The obtuse militarism of Berlin was rejected, but Curtius at one point shows himself disappointed at the age of nineteen and somewhat revolted by the reading of *Madame Bovary* and by the debilitating spectacle of its impulsive, erratic humanism. Nor as a more mature man was Curtius ever to feel the inner sympathy with Flaubert he had with for example Hofmannsthal. To him, the great figure was Balzac, the one XIXth Century French novelist "who says yes to life" (*lebensbejahend*), the creator of an epic impelled by an *élan vital* and the will to power, animated by a demiurgic ideal of "the quest for the absolute" after the Faustian model—and of whom Curtius became the peerless interpreter (5).

One sees the direction he was drawn to by his deeper affinities; *The French Spirit in the Twentieth Century* opens with pages on Gide and closes with a chapter devoted to the Abbé Bremond's *Histoire du Sentiment religieux,* for which Curtius has the deepest admiration and a native understanding. Only turn the perspective a little and one discovers the blind spot in Curtius' field of vision: the Grand Siècle and its sequels which, stifling the wonderful promise and expansiveness of the XVIth and XVIIth Centuries, began by imposing the restricting standard of reason and got for its trouble no more, says Curtius in an unmistakably disdainful accent, than "a discourse on man." For what arrests his interest is not so much man as man's ultimate possibilities, not so much the measure of order as measureless potentiality and measureless genius—a measurelesness which, according to his own definition, supplies an array, which is initiative and initiating (see *Der Humanismus als Initiative*), but which nonetheless transcends what is acquired—what is traditional—dissolving it so as to recast it into new forms. A conservative in politics—but a conservative searching for what is worth conserving, not restoring—,in aesthetics and in literature Curtius stands at the furthest remove from a "worshipper of the past": he discovered Proust before a good quantity of French critics had heard the name and, in the autumn of his life, this erudite patrician, still indefatiguable in his desire to tap the sources and currents of what seems to him to spring from an authentic originality, with evident pleasure translates the work of William Goyen.

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(5) The second edition of E.R. Curtius' *Balzac* has just been issued by the Francke Verlag in Bern. One wonders what the author's reactions would be to the protest in *Contre Sainte-Beuve* against the idolization of Balzac which, to Proust, seems "just so much madness", Balzac's "Faustism" for Proust amounting to no more than an acute social *arrivisme* not much mitigated by a voracious wordly greed. We might also mention, in order to give an idea of the confines of the Bonn critic's literary panorama, that Stendhal occupies a place of only meagre importance in it.

An affection for Corneille and Racine is not something one can feel simply because one decides one ought to feel it, and the *honnête homme* is perhaps no more than a Prometheus who mildly delights in his chains. It would be poor procedure to reproach Curtius for his preferences and if they lead him in his *Essay on France* to some abrupt judgments, identifying the French tradition with a neoclassicism of mediocre minds and wits, it would be hardly fair to dismiss the *reaction* which has its part in his opinions: a reaction against French conservatism which in the realm of intellectual matters is quite as static and narrow as Curtius' conservatism is free and open. A Maurras' or a Barrès' political nationalism was doubled not merely by an anti-German intellectual nationalism, but an equally frenetic "Roman and Cartesian" bias that dogmatically laid down the norms of "Latin lucidity" and slammed the door upon everything else, impatiently flinging anything un-Mediterranean into the dark shadows of barbarism. The ravages of that militant xenophobia—and it was not exclusively Germanophobe: Shakespeare and Dostoievski were no less offensive to the *esprit français* than was the "smoky" Hegel—were too profound to be minimized a posteriori. However, Curtius seems to have viewed these extravagances as the natural and *inevitable* destination of the road indicated to French literature by the sceptre of the Roi Soleil. One begins with Boileau, and what else can one expect? one ends up with Pierre Lasserre!

And then arose a new generation, in open conflict with this tight-fisted conservatism but nevertheless just as opposed to the materialism of Zola and his followers. A generation firmly rooted in its respective soils and yet able to converse in a familiar, easy manner with the treasures of world culture, understanding and relishing life's complexity, on the further side of three centuries of hollow rhetoric rediscovering God and the divine, poetry and metaphysics.

To Curtius' ready enthusiasm one ought not to impute illusions he never held; those which he did indeed cherish are enough to make for his present melancholy. He did not believe the original circle that founded the *Nouvelle Revue française*, the center of this brilliant sunrise, formed a homogeneous and indivisible team. But he did believe these so dissimilar writers collectively attested the appearance of a "New France", different from the old official France, rid of the obsessions and prejudices of the past, able to surmount its defeat and its thirst for revenge, ready to be reconciled with Germany in the communion of those supreme values and that liberated humaneness Romain Rolland saw in the dual heritage of Rome and Weimar. The germ of this France may perhaps have existed before 1914. More probably its representatives were just as isolated in their own country as, on the other side of the Rhine, were Curtius and his friends. But from the Strasbourg of Albert Schweitzer and Professor Knapp it was easy to be mistaken about what was afoot in Berlin, and it was rather Austria—at any rate the Austria of Stefan Zweig, of Hermann Bahr, of Hofmannsthal and of Rilke—whose light penetrated as far as the Prussian capital.

The First World War exiled Rolland and raised Barrès to the patriotic pontificate.

The Allies' victory only widened the breach separating them. "'The New France' I believed in fell to pieces at the very moment my book came from the press. But without the idealist's faith that moved me as it did others of my generation, this book would never have been written at all: it was a faith in the possibility and the necessity of a new Europe. This new Europe could only arise from the political conditions that show between the lines of my *Wegbereiter*. The European idea had to have a spiritual foundation. My book was an attempt to contribute to it." The reception given it could have encouraged Curtius in the belief his effort had not been wasted. *Wegbereiter* went through three swift editions. An ephemeral success. Those studies in *The French Spirit in the New Europe* which Curtius esteemed the richest, densest, most valuable, ran full tilt into the disaffection of 1925: the occupation of the Ruhr had occurred, so had the Rhineland separation, there was the inflation, then Hitler's Munich putsch, Hindenburg's election—"and in the meantime I went on praising Proust, Valéry, Larbaud. It was without much hope." Germany's angry withdrawal into her own shell was mirrored by French intolerance and flat lack of understanding. Nor had chauvinism spared the NRF group. Claudel seized up the trumpet and blew the Anti-German Crusade tune, Rivière wrote of the German's congenital inferiority, Suarès buried himself in solitude... the war had not only withered and twisted ideas but maimed hundreds of talents. The "pioneers'" successors were of a lesser stature than their elders: where Romain Rolland had failed a Drieu la Rochelle seemed hardly the one destined to succeed. Things had reached such a point that in his *Deutscher Geist in Gefahr* (*The German Spirit in Danger*, 1932) Curtius, while giving German youth a solemn warning on the perilous risks it was running by embracing an anti-humanist mysticism, conceded all the same that it could afford to abandon its interest in France (provided it kept a friendly, alert eye fixed on Italy), France no longer having anything new or positive to bring into the worlds' market-place.

From 1933 to 1945 Curtius was *persona ingrata;* he broke with his shoulder-shrugging friends and colleagues who were too docile in the face of "the signs of the times" and turned his whole attention to his researches on the Latin Middle Ages and European literature. Every one of the phases in nearly half a century of Franco-German relations had had its impact on him. Their cyclical character did not surprise him but neither did he take any comfort in lost opportunities. Directly after the Nazi defeat, it was with the loftiest skepticism he judged his compatriots' infatuation with the French mind and its productions: "To German literature, to German culture—insofar as they may be said to have survived, which our daily press is already willing to doubt or disprove—Valéry and Proust were unknown (6). Since 1945, half a dozen translations of Baudelaire have appeared in our country, so have three translations of Rimbaud. It looks as though we were bent on catching up with what has been going on in France since 1857. But one has perhaps gone too far afield when, reaching all the way back to 1885, one begins to cry up Verlaine and the overrated Huysmans. There are a good many explanations for the unsatisfactory state of German literature in 1950. One of the reasons things are the way they are must surely be that today we shy away from what is difficult: and that is the appropriation (*Aneignung*) of great masters and thereby the introduction of some spiritual substance into the beloved I. If one neglects to add rich ingredients, the soup always stays thin." Curtitus undertook the mission of a mediator (*Vermittler*) between German and French culture; he fulfilled it with a masterful prescience from the outset to the close of his university career—it was an achievement in 1918 to draw up what would become the Pantheon of French letters in 1950—; has he finally tripped over the cultural isolationism of post-Wilhelm German society? Early in the thirties, after having paid his respects to their ability to assimilate, Curtius leveled a comparable charge against the French, accusing them of living upon their intellectual capital, of dwelling, or rather of fossilizing, in an airtight ivory tower, as smugly narcissistic as so many retired clerks. Is that impermeability no less reciprocal than insurmountable? was Strasbourg of 1910 but a "privileged moment", a special, short-lived era in the history of European consciousness? Is the present condemned to repeat the past? Curtius raises those questions while evoking his memories, and he leaves them in suspense. It is possible he has failed to achieve his objective. However, in one respect he has neared it to the point of becoming one with it: he has himself become the model of a *Wegbereiter,* proposing the lesson of a work and of an example.

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(6) The assertion ought today to be partially amended with what regards Proust. The translation of the entirety of *A la Recherche du Temps perdu* is in progress and scheduled to appear under the imprint of Suhrkamp in Frankfort. Two volumes have come out already; they have been given a more than warm reception by the public and by the critics. We have been advised, however—and this has got to temper the optimism rightly inspired by Proust's success—, that out of thirty students in the seminar in Romance studies at the University of Bonn, not a single one knew Proust's name or suspected Curtius of having published a study of his writings.

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The case of Friedrich Sieburg, at once far more and considerably less dramatic than the great Bonn humanist's, is only superficially parallel. E.R. Curtius would never have felt moved to confess that "Throughout the course of my untiring conversation with France, I constantly felt myself more and more German." For that prolonged misfortune Sieburg blames France. The French have not understood him, just as in 1920, 1940 and 1954 France has not grasped what destiny or history has expected of her. This persistence in error, this obstinate blindness are not wholly without some advantage to Sieburg: they guarantee the unfading timeliness of *Gott in Frankreich* (whose irony best translates as *Is God French?*): here is a book, unlike those of Curtius, which is safely beyond the reach of fluctuating international situations and shifts in attitude. The principal edition must by now have topped 100,000. Its influence has not been negligeable. Curtius' essays were read by a restricted élite public and by and large won him more friends in France than in Germany but *Gott in Frankreich* created a considerable domestic stir. Karl Epting does not hesitate to attribute to it as great an importance as was once given Mme de Staël's *De l'Allemagne.* Sieburg's "images and judgments", writes Epting, "are the very ones we find scattered everywhere through the editorial and literary pages of almost all German newspapers." In his latest preface Sieburg seems overpowered and just a little fagged out by the imitations and plagiarisms he has inspired.

The fifty newly-added pages that precede the 1952 reprinting compose a long and brilliant elegy woven into a pattern of mingled apology and condemnation. A condemnation directed against France and the French who, in order to cover up their practically unanimous collaboration with the occupier (a collaboration the same Sieburg, as he seems completely to have forgotten, went about preaching from one city to the next, in public and in private), inflate and exploit German crimes so as, retroactively, to obtain a clear conscience. An apology of the author for his own self whom insults and vicissitudes shall not dissuade from going on loving France "come what may". A word of explanation upon one detail, rather upsetting to anyone who might pause over it. It would have been easy, Sieburg admits, to have freshened and brought certain chapters up to date; if he has not done so, it has been on purpose, so as not to compromise the inner structure (*das innere Gefüge*) of his book. Hence, had he affirmed that in Paris the telephones function in a normal way, that Briand was not a man of absolutely bad faith, that France is something more than an anarchy-ridden, vindictive and backward country, would the soundness of Herr Sieburg's conclusions have been jeopardized? But what if—and this is graver still—in the light of these minor readjustments (which, after all, the reader is able to perform by himself when he is not tempted, as he comes upon such items as telephones and automobile traffic, to establish comparisons which are not flattering to Germany) his conclusions were to look as though they had been arrived at beforehand, like a musical theme cropping up again and again from beginning to end of a not very scientific demonstration? what if the argument were to appear to be one long tautology?

And such, alas, seems to be the case. Herr Sieburg's great art consists in presenting his postulate—or rather in dissolving it—in amiable impressionistic vignettes, painted with a free-flowing technique against a background of tenderness and compassion. In itself, his theory is not new. Without having to go all the way back to the Flood, one discovers it in Max Scheler from whom Curtius borrowed it for his *Essay on France* (but Curtius is not unwilling to cite his sources), formulated, moreover, leaving aside the question of its intrinsic rightness or wrongness, with a concern for balance and fairness which was remarkable for the period (1916). France (Sieburg complains) pretends not to be defending her own private interests, nor to be propagating an ideal which is exclusively her own property. Her cause, she claims, is humanity's cause; her ideas those of universal reason, her principles those of the civilized world's ethic, her civilization is Civilization. She senses herself invested with a mission: "eldest daughter of the Church" or "soldier of the ideal", her task is to broadcast Truth, the unique and integral Truth, of which she is so to speak the elect and secular right arm. In the realm of practical achievements, of technical progress, France dawdles and lags, stubbornly resisting modernization—which resistance, Sieburg gives one to understand, is not without charm nor perhaps without underlying wisdom. In the spiritual domain, France is nothing if not more arrogant. Repeating Scheler, Sieburg exposes her intellectual egocentricity, her incessant moralizing, her messianism whereof Joan of Arc is the deathless symbol: it is plain that, with such pretentions, France is not only ready-made to misappreciate Germany and Germany's specific originality, but that France constitutes an obstacle to European harmony, a check upon the advance of history, a provoking anachronism—and an enduring anachronism, for today, in 1954, France is not one whit different from what she was in 1929.

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It is less interesting to weigh the question of whether Herr Sieburg is mistaken or correct (there would be little to add to M. Grasset's foreword to the French translation of *Gott in Frankreich*), than to turn one's thoughts to the possible motives that could have led him to pose this problem in the terms which have brought about the resounding success of his book—and to the consequences this manner of posing the problem has had upon Sieburg's contemporaries, French and German alike. For let there be no misunderstanding here: in Herr Sieburg's eyes, French ideology is no innocent, harmless mania. It must be seen and dealt with for what it is: a furious and contagious distraction, "the greatest heresy of this or any age". And the thing to do with heresies is extirpate them.

Actually, we would have no cause to bother ourselves with Sieburg's opinions—which as opinions are as respectable as any others—were it not that a heaven-sent, a "divine surprise" furnished their vulgarizer and many "friends of France" in whom he had awakened a sense of vocation, the opportunity to move into action. I refer to the war. And if I allude to those painful years it is not for the vain pleasure of reopening a debate we consider lost (or won) in advance, but in the hope of getting at the origins of the attitude of 1940's generation of conquerors. This *intermediary generation—Generation der Mitte,* to employ the title of the memoires of Karl Epting who took it upon himself, perhaps abusively, to be that generation's spokesman—marched straight after their pied piper. Whatever may have been their acquaintance and experience with France, for those young men it was Sieburg who possessed the key to France, *das entscheidende Wort.* Sieburg had produced no original version of the last word. But to the cohorts of the *Hitlerjugend,* to the veterans of the *Jugendbewegung* (of whom Abetz, the "ambassador in short pants", was the archetypical specimen), excited by the idea that former soldiers should fraternize, and enthusiastic about French painting, Sieburg offered a solution to the dilemma which, before assuming its crucial form in 1939, had been tormenting them for years: how was one to manage to love France, that happy land, and at the same time to reject France's "hegemony", the source of all Europe's unhappiness? Herr Sieburg snips this Gordian Knot with a flourish of his pen. Approaching the problem forthrightly, he teaches one how to dissociate the French style of life from the French style of thinking and how the first can prove quite as delightful as the second is abhorrent. And between receptions at the Ritz, Herr Karl Epting, director of the German Institute in Paris, is not merely content, as he writes in his *Cahiers France-Allemagne,* to celebrate that "free giving of the self thanks to which the German mind has had such a profound influence upon the evolution of national unities", but, anxious to dim this megalomaniac and artificial "radiation of the French spirit", he would erect the appropriate screens. "France must no longer consider herself the spiritual equivalent of a universal Church," he declares, putting Sieburg's common sense to rout, "but instead as a particular national unity determined by race and by history." French values and German values are to break lances in a chivalric tourney, and History, the umpire, shall award the prizes later on. For the moment, though, things are not all they should be in the arena. The knightly jousts have deteriorated and Epting sees no other choice but to resort to less polite tactics. After the war he was the first German publicist to demand—in the weekly *Christ und Welt*—that the Franco-German dialogue be resumed and that in addressing France the Germans employ "the language suitable to a powerful nation" (7). We have drifted far away from Herr Curtius and from his patrician, studious Europe.

The fact remains however that both—insofar as it would not be an insult to Curtius to imply an association between his name and that of a man who was the zealous supporter of a régime Curtius detested—, at the distance of a few years (but separated by an infinite intellectual and moral distance), entertained high expectations of a "New France" which never emerged from the limbo where both imagined it lay gestating. Must one then write a chapter on "German Writers and the French Mirage?" Behind Sieburg's declarations, behind Epting's, may one not glimpse the nostalgia for a "good France", the counterpart of the "good Germany" popularized in France by Mme de Staël and Edgar Quinet? But—and it is here one feels that there is a possible bridge between the "intermediary generation" and its ancestors, whose divorce moreover Curtius had clearly foreseen in his *The German Spirit in Danger*—the "good France" Curtius envisaged was after all the France of Péguy, of Valéry, of Gide, something not unlike the "good Germany" of "Gœthe and Beethoven". Twenty years later, the exponents of France's virtues leaned upon very different evidence: "the good France" of 1940 has nothing at all to do with "Proust and Ravel": it owes its goodness to its Breton fishermen and its Parisian wine-stewards. The 1940 version of the "good France" shows a country lacking nothing but its head. The responsibility for this decapitation can be laid up to the insanity of Nazi doctrines. It may also translate the passing of a generation that knew France through her literary heritage, and its replacement by a generation (in Germany at least; the same is not true of Austria and Hungary) that came to know France through her painting. Abetz, it is worth noting, was a teacher of drawing. He blankly confessed never having been in the least seduced by the French "spiritual message", whilst at one point, he says, that of Eastern philosophies came near to orienting his studies. At any rate, the voice of France falling on deaf ears, for this triumphant generation France descends from the rank of a person to the rank of a tempting object, of an

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(7) It would not be entirely just to hold Karl Epting to the letter of the reflections inspired by his imprisonment (he was confined in Paris; the book based upon that experience is *Aus dem Cherche-Midi,* Verlag Bonner Universitätsbuchdruckerei, 1951) even if one does not share the opinion of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine's* critic who finds Epting's rejection of humanism "refreshing". Nor can one really attack him for having thought fit to tender posterity his history of *The Sentiment of Predestination in the French (Das französische Sendungsbewusstsein,* Kurt Vowinckel Verlag, 1952), even if posterity will have to make do with passages such as this: "The language of French classicism is thin in words and poor in action, and international usage has since amplified it to the point of turning it into a kind of Esperanto. Not before Hugo and the Romantics, lyric poets like Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Rimbaud, polemicists like Bloy, Péguy and Bernanos was that language made more supple and stamped with the character of a living racial idiom (eines *lebendingen volkischen Idioms*)." But does Herr Epting's insight into Mallarmé's "racial" contribution to French qualify him to collaborate on the bulletin released by the Ranke-Gesselschaft, *Das Historisch-politische Buch,* and to deal cavalierly with Alfred Grosser's *West Germany (L'Allemagne de l'Occident),* a French book written in faultless good faith?

opportunity, as Carl Schmitt would say (8). To French subjective ideology such as they described it, the aesthetic subjectivism of Herr Sieburg and his followers makes answer (9).

It would be silly to wish to use their case as a stepping off point for generalizations. But their case nonetheless reveals what the German journalistic and literary eye was mainly able to see and record as it inspected France during the between-wars period. Leaving aside political prejudices, the plastic element was what caught and still catches its attention. Let us for example take a little pamphlet which enjoyed its hour of success, of deserved success, the *Pages From a Journal of the Campaign in France* (Karl Rauch Verlag) by an almost unknown writer who, after 1945, moved from "inner emigration" to the completest "outer" emigration. The author is Walter Bauer; for this unusual warrior, the conquest and the occupation were nothing short of an opportunity to beat a retreat... into his own self. And upon what objects does his inward-looking gaze come to bear? Upon Rodin, Maillol, Van Gogh, the Cathedral of Chartres, the Château of Amboise. That was worth 50,000 copies in 1942. Is it not equally symptomatic that Ernst Jünger gave the title *Strahlungen* (in English, "radiations", or "beams of light") to the journal he kept during the war and which is a sequel to his *Gardens and Roadways?* Running into Sieburg quietly seated in a famous Paris restaurant, Jünger remarks his appearance of feeling perfectly at home, his "aplomb". To be sure these men are of vastly unlike stature: one is, when all is said and done, not much more than the most accomplished chronicler of his generation. The other wrote *On the Marble Cliffs.* But, according to their own testimony, the finest years in the life of each were his years in Paris; and if Jünger's epicurism is a cut higher than Sieburg's sybaritism, the difference is one of class, not of nature. With that rather somnambulistic, absorbed gravity of his, Jünger, like a housekeeper jotting down her daily expenses or a Don Juan his conquests, carefully records the "new sensations" he discovers in Paris. Needless to say, they reveal a more discriminating sensibility than Sieburg's. Jünger is perfectly aware of the drama of the occupation (which, for Sieburg, boils down to a few worldly mortifications), of the distress and of the victims it is heaping up, of the atrocities being perpetrated in its name. Jünger is not one who would give France the sound advice of abdication. He is familiar with French culture, he is truly in his element. And yet, how distant, how absent is *his* France! He several times rebukes himself for not being attentive enough to the suffering that surrounds him; but actually it is the external world as such that escapes him. He cuts out his own privileged enclaves—a particular print-shop where one finds particular engravings, a friend's garden, a corner of Vincennes, five or six restaurants, a certain bank of the Seine where he vegetates during his moments of leisure. He goes hunting after butterflies and the coccinella in the Woods of Meudon, collects rare editions, fine bindings, hesitates at length over the choice of an ex-libris... Some readers have thought to notice a Nero-like quality in this detachment. But Jünger does not strive after a voluptuous isolation from the misery besetting his times, he is just as naturally withdrawn from them as if he were contemplating them from another planet. His France lies hundreds of light-years from the France with which he is contemporary; of it there comes to him no more than a livid, boreal irradiation, projected upon just one surface: this one, the page he is writing.

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The literature of squaring old accounts between France and Germany does little honor to its authors; it has even dishonored some of them on both sides of the line. Which is not to imply that systematic amnesia of disagreeable realities or living and lived-oppositions is the best manner of burying conflicts which have affected Franco-German relations. That, unhappily, is the temptation of a good many German novel-writers. Whereas in France anti-German indictments have fetched up a crop of novels whose Germanophobia has gone to the degree of caricature, the spiritual and political formal notices served by Germany on France have not for one moment discouraged, have even stimulated, the blossoming forth in Germany of sentimental if not Francophile pleadings, exhortations to Franco-German reconciliation over and above—or below—frontiers, prayers that, despite contrasts of character and ideological antinomies, things may yet go well. While the German Institute in Paris preached (in one recalls what tone) the "intellectual and moral reform" of the vanquished, the *Frontbuchhandlungen* was nourishing the occupation troops with a flood of books too identical one with the other not to make one pause and reflect. In this literature, the French were portrayed as being not only accessible, but practically converted to the notions of supranational brotherhood. These French have their quirks and shortcomings, yes, of course, but that does not prevent them from being *people just like anyone else*—a quality which, precisely, French "patriotic" novels, popular and academic (in this instance it amounts to the same thing) stridently denied to the Germans (10). It is not a question of a tailor-made propaganda, but rather of the more or less conscious propagandistic aspiration of a literary *genre* which has no need of publicity engineers to find an audience. The first edition of *André und Ursula* came to almost a million copies, the second, after the end of the war, has already reached 100,000, a figure at which *Dieter und Yvonne* (11) was just beginning to get its second wind. The France-Germany couple is a sure-fire smash-hit, and regularly does so splendidly that one wonders whether a Sieburg's or an Epting's partiality on a certain plane is not the correlative, on another plane, of their countrymen's inverse partiality *for* France (a partiality Michelet noted with emotion: "Maltreated though they were by our soldiers, the Austrian, the Swabian often wept to see the French depart"). But towards what are these favorable prejudices leading? The peripeties of *André und Ursula* afford us a good idea.

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(8) See the notion of *opportunity* in Carl Schmitt's interpretation of the romantic phenomenon (in *Politische Romantik*). Schmitt provided *Les Cahiers France-Allemagne* with one of its infrequent interesting contributions in his article on the influence of legists in the formation of the French state (Cahier No. 2). Since become famous, this text is, unfortunately, well larded with aggressively anti-Semitic remarks which, to judge by his later writings, Schmitt has felt it a point of honor not to retract.

(9) This subjectivism, latent throughout Friedrich Sieburg's writings, is given free rein in his book of Paris recollections, *Unsere schönsten Jahren* (French translation: *Je passais au bord de la Seine,* La Table Ronde, Paris, 1953), a masterpiece of tearful egoism.

Amidst the papers of her father, who has just expired, Ursula discovers the war-diary of a young French soldier who fell at Verdun. Miracle! In the terrible thick of fire and steel, André Duval refused to give way to hatred for the enemy, dreamt of naught but eternal peace reigning between France and Germany. In a word, the Sermon on the Mount delivered from the bottom of the trenches. Ursula senses it her duty to return this touching posthumous confession to the aunt of the disappeared youth who has lost his mother and father and whose address, miraculously! has been noted down in his diary. Another miracle! André was but wounded, has recovered, has set himself up in Eastern France, has a medical practice, and invites the pious stranger to spend her vacation at his family estate; for he has a château, yes, it is near Lunéville. The entire story unfolds in the provinces, and wicked Paris —although the countryside has not been totally preserved from contamination—is expressly repudiated as being the modern Babylon. We soon come to the hardly unlooked-for idyll involving André and Ursula, and it ends in the most brutal dénouement: a neurotic half-brother assassinates André following hair-raising incidents which ought logically to persuade any normally constituted German of the unwisdom of spending his holidays in France. Well, therewith surges up the fourth and clinching miracle: over André's tomb Ursula swears to dedicate herself to Franco-German reconciliation.

Between the writings of the first and second versions of this romance certain events transpired which called for unavoidable textual modifications: the canticles sung to the Führer's burning desire for peace are replaced by a moving pilgrimage to the house where Gœthe was born; the head of the State—a State which, after all these erasures and additions to the novel, has become timeless—is now a mere *Reichskanzler;* the diatribes against Versailles, against Negroes, against the Bolshevization of French foreign policy, against France's "fear psychosis" with respect to Germany, are all modestly suppressed (we are not yet in 1954, mark you still only in 1948); it is no longer a question of *Volksgenosse,* but of *compatriotes* (in French in the text), etc.

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(10) This remark should be made to apply mainly to the literary "anti-Bochism" whelped by the First World War; during the Second, the Résistance discovered that the adversary was human enough. Cf. the recent *Germany as Seen by the Writers of the French Resistance (L'Allemagne vue par les écrivains de la Résistance française)* by Konrad F. Bieber (Droz, Geneva, 1954).

(11) Askar Gluth, *Dieter und Yvonne*, Franz Ehrenwith Verlag, Munich, 1952.

Amusing though these rectifications doubtlessly are, they pose an extremely knotty problem: here is a novelist who plainly recognizes that recent international developments have given her thesis the severest buffeting. She nonetheless perseveres, from one version to the next, in the belief that, buffets or no, it is still a sound thesis and that she has but stolidly to pick up the same bruised categories and begin afresh. Thus Abetz, after having described the defeat of what he had considered a policy based on pure goodwill, proceeds to the good old-fashioned conclusion that "where one acts with a right heart, nothing is impossible". Thus Paul Distelbarth, beginning with his first book, *Lebendiges Frankreich* (Rowohlt, 1935), which earned him the never usurped reputation of a friend and connoisseur of France, has continued untiringly to call forth the people against the princes (in this instance politicians, armaments manufacturers, journalists, and so on). Distelbarth has not relaxed his efforts, and presenting a picturesque and truthfully drawn panorama of French landscapes and manners, returns dauntlessly to the charge, denouncing "those who fabricate strife and incomprehension" (12). Clearly, this Bovarysme of goodwill disposes of inexhaustible funds of obstinacy; history finally being nothing but the resultant of competing bad faiths and ill-wills, goodwill is sure to enjoy a fine and immortal, however postponed, rôle. Let a fourth or fifth Franco-German war erupt, and Ursula, Abetz, Herr Distelbarth and their successors, with their respective and by no means contemptible virtues, will go right on advocating the heart-to-heart as the sole alternative to the hand-to-hand. The bankruptcy of their formula is for them quite as accidental as the intrusion of violence into Franco-German relations. But with the perspective allowed us by the passage of time, we have the right to wonder whether it is good or bad will that locks these relations within a vicious circle.

By definition, ill-will, like sin, tends to have a perennial existence in man. Herr Distelbarth relates a few pretty examples of its perseverance, examples drawn from his personal experience: amongst others, he refers to those "democrats" who, to the horror of the author's Francophilia, were capable of modulating the popular outcry against the *Diktat* of Versailles. But has not goodwill an inner, a native tendency to disregard what in a nation is after all somewhat less contingent and superficial than the nation may prefer to suppose—that is to say, has not goodwill a deep-roted tendency to disregard the nation's ruling élite? On the individual plane, various peoples from the outset had little trouble, not perhaps in understanding each other, but in tolerating, helping, pleasing and even loving each other. But this kind of *entente cordiale* in the primitive state, which a priori eliminates "politics" and very often language too (substituting for them some pragmatic *lingua franca* or a purely gestural form of expression), and whose typical ideal is the simple one of the primary asocial brotherhood of men in a common plight (the trenches, the woods, for example), only operates on a limited and not upon the highest scale of human relations. And what is this "goodwill" that resigns itself to the prevalence of ill-will and stoutly insists it can understand everything—everything but ill-will—; what is this "goodwill" if not a nostalgia for a "prior way of life", prior to social and political organizations, even to family ties, and beyond all else, to techniques and their sanctions? And thus it proves that in the XXth Century—an era which in Germany (and perhaps not only in Germany) begins with the collapse of 1945—André and Ursula automatically take on the look of Paul and Virginie walking upon a world gone to pieces and gone mad. They are not only separated by an absurd stroke of chance, but, better still, there is something bloodless, cadaverous and unreal about their sentimental offspring.

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(12) *Frankreich gestern, heute, immer (France Yesterday, Today, Always),* Heilbronn, 1953. Herr Distelbarth's obstinate refusal to see anything in ideas beyond "big words" camouflaging evil designs or sordid interests does not in the least save him from tumbling into the same "falsehoods" of ideological formalism he exposes in others with such vehemence. Shortly after the war he published *Krieger und Bauer (Warriors and Peasants)* to prove, at the end of a laborious dissertation, that their entire history has prepared the French to till the soil and the Germans to wield weapons. Finding it full of "re-educational" value, the French occupiers hastened to put this book on the required reading list in the primary schols of the French Zone.

For, incredible metempsychosis! the France-Germany pair (in which, oddly enough, the male is almost always French) is now going to be reincarnated after 1945—and in what a strange guise! The argument of Stefan Andres' *The Marriage of Enemies* (13) defies both digest and commentary, so wonderfully well does it depend upon a garish machinery of coincidences arranged to suit the requirements of the cause. Here we have a French officer's thwarted love for a young Rhineland maiden, the last of an old line of Huguenot émigrés, as in the film based upon the story by Ernst Petzold, *Es kommt ein Tag* (*There Shall Come the Day*) whose title sums up the whole blissful "goodwill" eschatology. The disconcerting thing about this particular novel—whose setting is Trier and Touraine in the 1920's—is that it does not come from the pen of some German Delly like Frau Höffler, but from an established author, respectable, covered with all sorts of honors, considered among the best in the post-war generation, acquainted with and fond of France, and above all one who in his writings is unafraid to have squarely at the problems of his times—the totalitarian universe in his trilogy, *Die Sintflut,* the Spanish Civil War in *Wir sind Utopia.* However Andres needs but come to grips with the problems of Franco-German relations and he plunges straightway into facile allegory (his transparent heroine is almost enough to make Colette Baudoche seem sympathetic), founders in the conventional and in brumph, lacking even Frau Polly Maria Höffler's verve and ingenuity.

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The luck of these now pink, now dark romances, which circulate on a level below fullfledged literature, has not been impaired, as we have seen, by the events of 1945, even though to the best of our knowledge no one so far has risked consulting the Second World War for a more up-to-date André-and-Ursula team. However, the formula is still sound and will probably go on enriching its publishers and stirring its readers, for the greater part women. And so it has its usefulness if not its justification. There is only one score upon which it can be reproached: in it, sentimentality stifles all other feelings, or rather numbs feeling itself. For whenever plain feeling manages to gain a slight edge over peroration, the atmosphere immediately becomes breathable. What could be more enlivening, more tonic, fresher than the psychological climate of *Boche in Frankreich,* the episode from *The Questionnaire* which appeared excerpted in 1951 as a pocket-book and which is now in its one hundred and fiftieth thousand? True enough, it is a love-story whose authenticity is guaranteed by the utter indifference of its personages—the narrator, Ernst von Salomon himself,

(continued on page 293)

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(13) ***Die Hochzeit der Feinde*, Piper, Munich, 1953.**

Lennart Olson

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stazione termini, Rome. I

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four photographs

and a young Basque girl from Saint-Jean-de-Luz—towards whatever is not immediately concerned with their great affair. From the point of view of the committees on Franco-German cooperation and their cause it would be hard to imagine lamer recruits. If the author brings up the *rapprochement* of the two countries at all, and places the speech in the mouth of a Frenchman, it is not without a sting of relief-affording malice after so much labored pathos: "Ha! Well Sir! You're German, eh! Me, I'm French! Ha, the next war, Sir, eh? you and us... and against the Italians. Ha, what do you think of that!..."

Humor, for a trace of which one has hunted in vain through the romantic rag-piles of symbols of Gallo-Teutonic antagonism, winks its eye and resurrects the hope of a *détente*. And indeed, humor impregnates not only von Salomon's charming tale—"the finest vacation in my whole life," he says of his adventure—but a legion of minor works, works at any rate of modest proportions and modest pretentions, which are beginning to make space for themselves in the bookshop windows and are pointing the way towards an understanding of France—a way paved at last with more than good intentions and imperishable glories. An often deceptive modesty, furthermore: such a lexicon—exceedingly instructive behind its casualness—as *The French Language in Everyday Dress* (*Französische im Alltagskleid,* Sarrverlag, Saarebruck) a few years after its publication in 1946 revealed in its author, Paul Medina, the excellent Paris correspondent of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. If Walter Lenz gives the title *Alphabets* to his two collections of exercizes in poetico-semantic deciphering of the vocables said to contain the quintessence of French wit (*Franzosen hin, Franzosen her Federn vom Gallischen Hahn,* Limes Verlag, Wiesbaden), it is quite as much through defiance of metaphysical-literary systems as through confidence in a deliberately concrete method of approach. France is no longer an entity one encounters in the clouds, but a geographical and historical, an economic and social reality which one has got to seize and cope with in its own terms and not in the sentimental perspective of a confused haze of vanishing landmarks and dissolving frontiers. From the simple *Taschenbuch für Frankreichfarer* to the more complex manuals of *Geistige Länderkunde* in whose forefront one should mention Erwin Karl Münz's *Frankreich* (Glock und Lutz Verlag, Nuremberg), to equally penetrating and pertinent analyses, that is the tendency which seems to prevail in this profusion of itineraries where tourism and cultivation walk hand in hand. The citizens of the young Federal Republic do a lot of traveling. A fortnight in France no longer takes on for them that quality of a faraway expedition it still has in *André und Ursula.* Whether hiking on foot, or cycling, or motoring, they have an ordinary sense of movement and direction and go straight towards the object they are eager to discover; even if they put no particular *Gründlichkeit* into this attitude, it still contrasts most advantageously with the one their parents held.

The preceding generations, that of Curtius as well as of Epting, had placed themselves before France in a posture of contemptuous contemplation: Germany called upon her neighbor to satisfy her appetite for spice and sensation, indeed for higher pleasures. France's existence was chiefly defined in terms of the functions of delight. A vast pretext for the Germans to swoon away into moody oblivion, they expected France to laugh, to wiggle, to accomodate: France's strikes, her domestic disorders, her convulsions had about them something incongruous and strangely out of character: as if the figures in a painting were to take it into their heads to step out over the frame and on out into the street. It was in the very best of sincere good faith that thousands of France's occupiers thought that, far from oppressing her, they were, under the favor of circumstances, putting her back on her feet, guiding her back to that "luxurious, calm voluptuousness" whence she had strayed because she had forgotten her true mission: to make others happy. But her own happiness? Her problems, her aspirations, her contradictions? It seldom occurred to anyone to bother over them, to take them seriously. From the start to the middle of the century, nothing of France was *known* beyond her painting (not even her literature, if one may believe

Curtius), reproduced in countless albums and commentaries. As for the rest, no beating around the bush is necessary: nothing, not even the tail end of what was published at the same time in France by way of general and detailed information about Germany. This yawning gap, which has remained until today (14), not only explains that such a mediocre compiler as the resentment-ridden Herr Epting can find space for his "expert's" observations in everything from Protestant pages to the very Catholic *Wort und Wahrheit,* but that, in this domain, amateurs and turncoats (15) of the most redoubtable sort are able to conduct their little villainies with impunity. The translation of *Origines de la France contemporaine,* just issued by S. Fischer, is virtually allegorical of the lag in German bibliography on what is happening in France. Well, one is always someone's contemporary. The finest praise we can give the little books we alluded to above is that they refer not to the France of Taine's day, but to his greatgrandchildren's. But those little texts are not enough to compensate for the immense vacancies in specialized literature. They do show that the conditions for an objective study are present, or nearly present, and this objective study would be welcome, not necessarily to replace, but simply to coexist with the tide of futile performances, tear-jerking and admonitory fictions in the style of the good old days.

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At the present time a healthy development towards the *exorcizing* of Franco-German relations seems to be taking shape. The abrupt deflation incurred by ideologies that were hinged to the fortune of the Hitlerian *Weltanschauung,* the multiplication of contacts between individuals and group exchanges between French and Germans, the broadening of their horizon to coincide with the dimensions of the modern world which puts an exceedingly provincial look on this Franco-German *tête à tête,* have all contributed to the overthrow of prejudices and apprehensions.

The indispensable conciliation of France and Germany's divergences of tradition, of temper, of mental and social structures unavoidably obliges any commentator to cast a searching eye upon the beliefs or the animosities which for so long have kept this division intensely alive. That is why Herr Otto Heinz Sieburg's work is of such particular importance: it clears the way not only for a new conception of France, but for the kind of researches, of investigations of France that Herr Lüthy's book provides.

Otto Heinz Sieburg's main achievement is to have tidied up the picture. He does not confine himself, as so many of his predecessors had, to scouting up passages to quote and to making symmetrical arrangements of what Germans have had to say about the French, and French about the Germans. He is more eager to discern differences than to exploit likenesses and create happy blendings. For each period he investigates, he scrupulously charts the concrete political and psychological conditions that affected historians and writers in their discussions of what was taking place in the neighboring country. Herr O.H. Sieburg quite justifiably thinks that the period in Germany running from 1815 to 1848 was richer in developments and accomplishments than the period 1848 to the present. But what of the decades immediately before 1815? do they not deserve a little more than the brisk treatment Sieburg gives them in his introduction? For those years contain the entire problem of the awakening of the German nation's historic consciousness, and of the attitude adopted by Germany—or the Germanies—in the face of the French Revolution and the Empire.

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(14) This is eloquently confirmed by the bibliography of German studies on France published since 1945 and of French on Germany, printed as an appendix in *Deutschland-Frankreich*—a minute catalogue, but not exhaustive despite its attempts to be, it lists 500 titles as against 1225. The author of the introduction mentions this disproportion and in it finds a "surprising fact". However it may surprise, and whomever, the fact is not new. And of the three attenuating circumstances involved, the first (publishers' troubles prior to the monetary reform) and the third (the literary page of German newspapers absorbs prose which, in France, normally finds its way into reviews, which is plausible, for example, in the case of Karl Korn's remarkable chronicles in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*) seem to us rather on the margin of the question than at its center, whilst the second answers it splendidly: there are countries whose political, economic and social development arouses more curiosity than France's. Who would dream of taking umbrage at that? But the deficiency of serious works about France is particularly emphasized by the repeated declarations from every quarter of German society that it has the keenest interest in France.

(15) There is nothing that is not most honorable in a French citizen who writes in German for a German audience only. But if it is a question of telling it that everything that has gone on in France since 1944 amounts to a frightful accumulation of massacres and turpitudes organized and financed by Moscow and stemming in a direct line from the storming of the Bastille, the thing becomes contestable and makes one think of the XVIIIth Century emigration literature. That is what may be said of the book by "Professor" Jean Guiton (not to be confused with M. Jean Guitton, an authentic Sorbonne professor), *Französische Lustände* which would merit the subtitle "Nine Years of French Life Viewed From Sigmaringen". The startling thing about this performance is that it bears the entirely respectable imprint of Heyne Verlag in Munich and that "Professor" Guiton trumpets his wisdom from tribunes as seldom suspected of fondness for collaborators as the *Europa-Archiv* and the *Deutsche Rundschau.*

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In the wellsprings of German nationalism as they are designated by Herder—whom Nazism glorified as the apostle of ethnic particularisms, contrasting him with the cosmopolitan Gœthe—Hans Kohn, in his *The Idea of Nationalism*, detects the continuity of the mainstream of Judeo-Christian thought which attained full flower in the *Aufklärung*. All men strain towards the same ideal, even if the paths they choose are as various as their customs and ways of living. But, when this nationalism finally reaches its term in fulfillment, the human community has reverted, or come round, to the tribal age, to the free-for-all struggle of each against every other. Even in a thinker as moderate as Max Scheler—a psychologist who lays much stress upon the native sympathy that exists between men—one finds a certain veiled jubilation as he calls attention to his own fellow countrymen's deficiency in a devotion that spills over with patriotic egotism, of a convinced feeling of supremacy and grace similar to that the French, or the English, or the Russians have: "As against the lofty idea these nations entertain of themselves, Germany is too frank, too straight-forward and plain-worded (*zu wahrhaftig und zu schlicht*). Germany calls power power, self-interest self-interest... We do not believe in the equality of nations." History, the summoning unto the last judgment seat upon which sits no God, will separate the sheep from the goats, classify the greater and the lesser just as History will snatch away the mask of hypocrisy wherewith nations modestly conceal their legitimate cravings. That modesty, outlined against a background of Apocalypse, is perfectly capable of turning into missionary zeal, into the messianism not of truth but of sincerity.

Thus, we might say, German idealism in the hands of its latest manipulators has come round to repudiating idealism, any given people's ideology being nothing but ruse, guile and travesty—that is to say, following these contemporary German writers, ideology has ceased to possess its true regulating and corrective faculties which keep in check what is irrational and insatiable behind the too naive candor of this deliberately *amoral* realism. The implacable logic with which Nazism pushed this positivism of violence to its ultimate consequences would have horrified Scheler. But if one accepts as a principle that the mightier are always the more right, does not right itself become superfluous? And as this evolution towards nihilism forged steadily ahead, was it not implicit in the design of things that France—with her often long-winded and irritating claims that above all her avowed or unavowed self-interests she placed the idea of man that has been shared at all times and in all countries (and which Germany had shared in bygone days: after all, it is to Kant the Third Republic owed the core of her lay civism)—was bound to goad her rival's animosity to a higher and higher pitch?

However, the conflict was not carried on in a private backyard. To place their frictions (as does Herr Sieburg) under the sign of a radical incompatibility between "the rationalist and mechanistic universalism of the Latin-French tradition of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries" and "the organicistic Helleno-Germanic universalism which was to have a decisive influence upon the XIXth Century"—or, as does Herr Curtius in his essay on "Civilization and Germanism" (in *Französischer Geist im neuen Europa*), to consecrate France and Germany "the only two world powers of the intellect and spirit"—, is indeed exaggeratedly to schematize the history of ideas. So many objections and reservations crowd to mind that one must restrict oneself to a few allusions. "Helleno-Germanic"—is this the romantic concept of a Novalis or a Schlegel? Not quite; have not their dreams of a Catholic and Roman medieval revival been left out of the picture? The answer to the egalitarian doctrines of the Jacobin invaders turned out to be, not pan-Germanic pantheism, but absolutist and legitimist rationalism à la Metternich.

But, above all else, this duel of "universalisms" is an a posteriori construction which takes into account interferences no more profound than the squabbles between professors or the poetic skirmishes over the "German Rhine" issue. O.H. Sieburg says as much à propos of Michelet: to counter his expansionist theory of French genius, Ranke does not reply with an ultra-expansionist theory of German genius. German historicism is still heavily laden with the relativism of the English school (and of its Hanoverian annex, might add Herr Droz, who supplies a preface to Sieburg's book), the school of tolerance and of acknowledging *the other point of view's unalterable presence* (but that other point of view is not incommunicable, for although tempered with skepticism, the universality of the language of reason remains intact). When romanticism—which until that stage was still no more than one ingredient, if one wishes the most vital and most original ingredient, in German intellectual life between 1815 and 1848—was, much later, to constitute itself as a unique, totalitarian, in theory universalist *Weltanschauung* of not simply culture but of human destiny; when romanticism really began to compete with "Latin-French" humanism, *it was not against France, but against England* it hurled its thunderbolts and imprecations. And that is what Herr Sieburg's study omits pointing out: the second volume ends comfortably with the Treaty of Frankfort. But whoever reads Spengler and his forerunners is quite able to see the turn things abruptly took. There is much talk of "unrequited love", of *Hassliebe* between France and Germany. But what is one to say of the more secret, more repressed, in any event less articulate love between England and Germany! The Third Reich fostered a parody of Franco-German *rapprochement* (upon this point, Abetz's candid amazement before his masters' duplicity leaves no lingering doubts), but until the eleventh hour, it sighed after the chimerical hope of, if one may phrase it thus, a "Greater Saxon" condominium (16). Upon what the subject of what Germany has been, of what she might have become, we shall have too incomplete a view so long as the intellectual, economic and political history of German-British relations remains unwritten.

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Since 1945, what one may term the Americanization of Germany—of a Germany, it is true, from which Prussia has been lopped off by force—has shifted in the direction of the United States the essential part of the same complexes hitherto aimed at England. Engalnd, nevertheless, is still treated to more objective and sharper studies than those regularly alloted to France. And indeed one has had to wait for a Swiss, M. Herbert Lüthy, to inject, if not a direction, at least a new energy into the latter. His effort will be received with mixed sentiments by the life-appointed authorities on French questions. Friedrich Sieburg, all by himself, has written several reviews of the book. He has words—the conventional words—of praise for it. But he also records a discreet disapproval of what he takes for a complacent contradiction: this business of the title: what is this about France running on "French time"? There is only one way of running and being on time, murmurs Sieburg in the tone of a man who has never been kept waiting by his coachman. The French clock keeps time pretty badly; why not come out and say so plainly?

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(16) See Fritz Hesse's "revelations" in his *Das Spiel um Deutschland* (List, Munich, 1953), a book dealing with an alleged British attempt to act as mediators after German troops entered Poland. The author declares he was to have been the go-between in this undertaking which looks so very much like a diabolic scheme, and which was to lead to a dividing up of the "available" world into German and British spheres of influence. The *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, published by the Munich Institute of Contemporary Affairs, in its July 1954 issue examined the improbabilities upon which the novel relating these occult negotiations was based. Concocted out of pure fancy, Fritz Hesse's tale is only the more symptomatic of the dreams that haunted the Nazi ruling circles, dreams most spectacularly confirmed by the mild treatment of the English troops backed against Dunkerque and Rudolf Hess' flight. Literarily, they find their highest expression in the "Speech to the English" (by Hans Grimm, the régime's poet laureate), a long appeal to Nordic brotherhood "between two élite races" (*Hochtwertige*) and against the mounting tide of inferior peoples. The Third Reich execrated but respected England, whereas it was contemptuous of France. Why? It is to the roots of this attitude one must finally get.

However, it would be hard to accuse M. Lüthy of uncritical tenderness. He deals severely with the Fourth Republic and willingly delivers sermons in that style of rumbling periods and swelling metaphors which bears the seal of toughminded Swiss journalism. But is it because of a difference between Herr Sieburg and himself, or between the France of thirty years ago and today's France?—on the first reading, no matter how inattentive his reader may be, he will observe that M. Lüthy is not crying in a desert or rather that this desert is very well peopled and that Lüthy is in the best of company. The defects and failures in French policy have been remarked by no more unpitying critics than certain French. When he brings up the 1940 collapse, M. Lüthy refers himself to Marc Bloch; when he turns to the sclerosis of economic structures sheltered by an impenetrable thicket of interior and exterior protective barriers, M. Lüthy goes to the autocriticisms pronounced by French reformists for his arguments and his basic analyses. For if he does not seem to have the highest esteem for our politicians—nothing "unFrench" in taking this line—, he unstintingly praises and admires the foresight, the intelligence and the competence of our great administrative technicians who, for him, are not only the nation's elite, but its veritable governors, the secret props and stays that keep France upright, the motor that makes France move and move well.

M. Lüthy, indeed, is not partisan to the notion of French "decadence"; rather, he believes in the growing pains of a country which, in recent centuries, despite revolutions, has achieved an internal human and social equilibrium which world-wide changes, the political, demographic and scientific evolution of human beings has rendered obsolete. In the face of this new situation France can react in either of two ways: by jealously falling back upon her "national heritage", by inflexibly insisting upon the rights and respect due the "great power" France was and isn't anymore—that is the Bidault-de Gaulle policy of 1944, the one implicitly called for in certain ringing speeches uttred by certain of the Third Republic's most famous orators—; or, yielding to the pressure of facts, enlightened by technocrats, by responding to the necessities of adaptation and mobilizing the many resources contained in her soil and in her people. M. Lüthy inclines to think that in the long run the forces of rejuvenation will win out against psychological resistances and the parasitic coalitions of interests maintained by the régime's old guard. But he is wary of an excessive optimism. During a ten years' experience, the archaism of the system of distribution and political shillyshallying have given a fine indication of how much dynamism they could soak up and divert: ten years after the war, France remains largely unrecovered and unre-equipped. Would "European integration" have afforded France's energies an efficient outlet? would it have boosted production by weakening these energy-wasting factors? Such was the author's belief as he reached the final pages of his book, and M. Mendès-France's coming to power did nothing to shake it, as show M. Lüthy's recent *Der Monat* chronicles which succeed the ones he used in writing his book.

We cannot very well follow all the steps in the development of M. Lüthy's argument, his flashbacks, his excursions, and even his digressions. His book is a brilliant and compact whole which requires to be approached from several angles, just as Lüthy himself approaches France via the plurality of her structures and traditions. At first glance, its composition may seem a little helter-skelter, its movement a bit loose, the chapters following one another rather accordng to the author's fancy and never having a clearly delimited "topic"—save for the in every way remarkable second part given over to extra-metropolitan France—, but, in the last analysis, it is this very appearance which is most instructive: one easily imagines what sort of implacable and impeccable "synthesis" some other adept would have been able to extract from the materials M. Lüthy has stirred together, even if one wonders whether his just refusal of monistic and linear interpretations might not have fitted well with an increased rigor and conciseness. He has at least the infinite merit of taking the French as they are. Far from wishing to subordinate their character to some one of its elements—whether that were to be the egalitarian fury Herr Sieburg ascribes to the French, or the simple-minded patience and home-loving fustiness Herr Distelbarth, speaking as a true Neckar Valley peasant, loves in them—, his affinities move him instead to stress the complexity of their origins and their tendencies and thus to have done with the myth of a France One And Indivisible beneath its bag of bones old sleepyhead's mask. Because familiar with the contents of the "dossier" M. Lüthy has opened, certain hard to please readers will perhaps find that his book contributes nothing new, nothing original, "does not go very far". Nonetheless, *Frankreich Uhren gehen anders* brings German-language literature on France across a decisive threshold: at a single stroke, M. Lüthy puts out of fashion those extractions of quintessence which over the course of a hundred years had been the rule in books of this sort.

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A mutual understanding has been thought possible: but to understand is always to understand an intention, and it is against nothing other than the neighboring country's intentions, hidden or proclaimed, real or imagined, that both Germany and France have risen up in ever-renewed wrath. *Qui trop embrasse étreint mal:* the bear-hug having proven a failure, it seems as though the gentler touch were now in order. Germany was no more eager to transform itself into a "sister-Republic" of France than was France to serve as an agricultural appendix to the Third Reich. Cannot this wanting to turn the Germans (or the French) *into* something or other be replaced by an attempt to undertake something *with* them? Better to strive to know one's own self than to go afield chasing *essences, final qualities* and *fundamental choices.* It may then become possible to find a middle term between a forced conversion and a supercilious holding at bay. The historical disparities and those of character can lose some of their intensity, but such things never completely disappear, nor are they to be abolished. French and Germans will never be undistinguishable, interchangeable, and it is precisely because they have rushed in hot pursuit of this mirage of an impossible identity that they have all too often wound up shipwrecked. France and Germany have something better to do with their time and efforts than to try to look like twins. They can have in common what they create in common. Fifty miles of highway constructed together forms a stronger bond than fifty novels featuring the Franco-German newlyweds. For roads, so to speak, insinuate themselves into the customs and manners of a people. Whereas novels, as everyone knows, are content to corrupt them.

Alain Clément

NOTES

Aldington's critics

Certain definite qualifications are required of anyone wishing to comment on Richard Aldington's *Lawrence of Arabia.* These were implicitly laid down by the English press when the book first appeared. I have none of them. I was not one of Lawrence's innumerable intimate friends, have not written any of the standard eulogies of the man, have no personal dislike of Aldington. As if all that weren't enough to rule me out, I may as well admit to knowing certain *facts* in connection with the book, since—as he explains at the beginning of his biography—it was I who suggested to Aldington that he should write it and I remained thereafter in close touch with him and with his publishers.

For a start, this puts me in a position to deny the suggestion that Aldington set out with the idea of "debunking" Lawrence. On the contrary, most of his original "information" on Lawrence had come from myself, an uncritically enthusiastic admirer. His painstaking analysis of the evidence *forced* him to the conclusion that Lawrence was largely a fraud, certainly a liar and a megalomaniac. Of course, the gentlemanly thing would have been to suppress or ignore these facts and turn out another of the decorous fairy tales devoted to Lawrence's glory. It certainly wouldn't have taken him the years which he was obliged to give to the job of recording the truth.

If Aldington himself wasn't prepared to supress facts, the English legal system did its best to do it for him. The laws of libel and copyright necessitated seemingly endless vexatious excisions before the book could even be set up. It was depressing but interesting to see what cuts were required—one obtained a fevered glimpse of the urbane commonsense of the English law. Thus, it was apparently a wholesale defamation of everyone concerned just to quote, without comment, the opinions of Lawrence held by various eminent hagiographers; *Aldington*, for God's sake, would, it seems, have risked a libel action if he had quoted *Herbert Read's* somewhat austere views of Eric Kennington; *et patata et patati.*

Nothing really essential, however, was removed—for the reason that the essence of the book is its objective presentation of facts which cannot be disputed even by trained legal minds. This must have been a nasty shock to that friend of Lawrence's who, with a deviousness worthy of the Master himself, obtained a set of proofs long before publication and initiated the mendacious press campaign against the book.

And what a campaign! The "critics", literary London's big guns, were held in reserve; but at least a year before *Lawrence of Arabia* was published, a bizarre commando of Lawrentians was tut-tutting away in newspapers from London to New York, from Sydney to Montreal. One can't blame them, poor devils. They saw (quite rightly) that Aldington's book was as much an exposé of their own gullibility as it was of Lawrence's grandiose boastings. A peer of the realm (distinguished for having done something humourous at Oxford forty years ago), a military expert (whose pre-war prophecies make fascinating reading today), that "splendid pavement artist", Eric Kennington (French liberty enables us to cite Sir Herbert's description, even though Aldington could not)—they had all solemnly recorded their conviction that Colonel Lawrence was—well, nothing short of an amalgam of Napoleon, Jesus Christ and Shakespeare; they owed it to *themselves* as much as to Lawrence to discredit the iconoclastic Aldington.

Their preliminary snipings were not particularly impressive—about as effective as a foray by Lawrence's own Bedouins—and the real fun only began when the book was actually published and the CRITICS got to work.

Hand-picked men, all of them—there was nothing of the haphazard guerilla about *their* performance; they had the rigid uniformity of a platoon of Guards. Not one of them broke ranks to consider whether Aldington had proved Lawrence a liar and a fraud, not one of them at-

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LE RASSASIEMENT ETERNEL

tempted to answer the regrettable array of facts; with splendid impassivity they ignored the lot.

C'était magnifique, mais... For they not only impaled themselves on the bayonet points of Aldington's logic but even succeeded in blowing their own heads off with their own muzzleloaders. Trooper Kennington, for example, charged over the pages of *Truth* at a hell of a gallop but chose to attack Aldington in respect of statements based on letters *from Lawrence himself* which dare-devil Kennington had never read; in the next issue, Rob Lyle was obliged to pick up the pavement artist's musket and put him out of his misery.

Similarly, Harold Nicholson was found suffering from a self-inflicted wound in the pages of (I think) *The Observer*. He had always, it seems, thought Lawrence a liar and a sadist but reading Aldington's book (which *proved* how right he was) had caused him to change his mind. The amazing posture in which he thus placed himself only goes to show the dangers which those who are not military experts risk when they try to apply the strategy ot indirect approach.

The inventor of that ingenious concept, by the way, was in charge of the whole operation. It was presumably in obedience to his own subtle theories that he has so far shown himself reluctant to make a frontal attack on Aldington's basic contentions, which are:

1) Throughout his life Lawrence told highly embellished tales of his own achievements—or, to skip the indirect approach, was a bloody liar. About the only occasions on which he clearly told the truth were when he announced that "History is but a series of accepted lies" and when he stated in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* that he "began to wonder if all established reputations were founded, like mine, on fraud." Those friends of Lawrence's now so busily proving that he was quite incorrigibly truthful might meditate on the two utterances. Not that they will.

2) Specifically in regard to Arabia, Lawrence lied even more fantastically than at other times. In private conversation (as distinct from public handouts) Allenby did not seem to be aware of what a treasure he had under his command; General Barrow (who, since he served in the region, is really not entitled to an opinion) considered Lawrence's contributions to the Middle East campaigns negligible; Major-General Rankin of the 4th Light Horse thought the same and has recently described Lawrence as "a little tinpot fake". According to Captain Liddell Hart, who only saw Lawrence in action in London drawing-rooms, these witnesses are all wrong.

3) Lawrence's immense popular reputation was made for him by the American journalists, Chase and Thomas, who were helped to the uttermost extent in this praiseworthy enterprise by the modest little subject of their clap-trap.

4) The same self-effacing humility induced Lawrence to give every assistance to Robert Graves in his preparation of a biography, although—like Lowell Thomas's book—it carried a note to the effect that Colonel Lawrence hadn't the faintest idea of what was in it.

But why go on? Aldington's presentation of the facts may not suit Captain Hart, the Boy Scout Movement or the rural vicarages. It is very sad; but he will certainly survive their disapprobation. And since this may discourage the gallant Captain from pursuing his campaign, perhaps he might like to try and cope with an attack on his flank launched by Major-General Rankin:

> Lawrence was without question one of the greatest impostors of the 1914-18 War. But for Lowell Thomas he would never have been heard of. The contribution made by the Arab forces under Lawrence to the desert campaign was negligible. Ask any Light Horse men who served in the desert.
>
> The Arabs were craven in the face of any real opposition, preferring to skulk behind the battle, waiting to lay waste towns captured by our organised armed forces. Their barbaric slaughter of wounded and helpless prisoners and senseless pillage and destruction were sickening to any civilised man.
>
> If Lawrence was not a sadist, at least he made no attempt to control the primitive savagery of the Arab rabble at his heels, bought by Foreign Office gold.
>
> On one occasion I threatened to shoot Lawrence for this very reason.
>
> Shortly after the entry into Damascus by the 4th Light Horse Regiment (the Arabs afterwards claimed it as theirs) my regiment was called out to prevent the looting and slaughter in which Lawrence's Arabs were indulging.
>
> I had my Sergt-Major Robertson set up a Hotchkiss machine-gun covering Jemal Pasha Avenue, where some of the worst incidents were happening, with orders to shoot any Arabs who refused to desist.
>
> Lawrence, theatrically garbed in the silken garments and gold-threaded headdress of an Arab Shareef, haughtily complained that my

troops were shooting his Arabs. I threatened to shoot him if he didn't attempt to control them. When I think of what the Sherifians did in Damascus and other towns I am sometimes sorry I did not shoot.

The men who really did something towards organising the Arabs were Colonel Newcombe and Major Joyce, two fine British Army officers, and Jaffa Pasha, afterwards a powerful force in Irak, who were in the Hejaz long before Lawrence ever appeared.

I once asked Newcombe, 'Why do you stand this little tinpot fake swaggering around taking whatever kudos is going?' Newcombe replied 'I am a regular Army officer, and it is not my job to attract attention to myself. Besides, it wouldn't help my work.' Newcombe was at that time engaged in secret service activities. (*From an interview published in the Melbourne Argus of 2-3-55.*)

Alister Kershaw

Graham's **Nightfishing**

With the publication of *The Nightfishing* (1) Sidney Graham has established his position as the most important poet under forty writing in English. Apart from the title poem this book contains a series of Letters (7), and two Ballads. Written over a period of five years the book is a full development of the promise he showed in *The White Threshold* (2).

In contrast to the majority of poets being printed in Britain and America Graham is of proletarian origin. The things about which he writes, his metaphors and turns of phrase are taken from a way of living which we all know about, but with which almost none of us is familiar. The basis of his experience is clearly reflected in the subject matter of his poetry and in the verse techniques he has learnt and changed to suit himself. Throughout the seven Letters, Graham, using the first person singular, addresses his 'dear'—for they are love letters—in a series of partially rhymed octosyllabic stanzas. The breaks between them are not of an accepted and repeating pattern, but are formed by changes of mood, or *asides*. The rhythms worked up within the roughly three-foot line are plainly those he heard in childhood or used when working among the common people. There are a certain number of Scots phrases and words, and a few 'technical' fisherfolk terms. These in no sense hamper the clarity of the poems. He speaks directly of his origin:

Younger in the towered
Tenement of the night he heard
The shipyards with nightshifts
Of lathes turning their shafts.
His voice was a humble ear
Hardly turned to her.
He found his poetry arm
And turned the coat of his trade.
From where I am I hear
Clearly his heart beat over
Clydeside's far hammers
And the nightshipping firth.
What's he to me? Only
Myself I died into
These present words that move.
In that high tenement
I got a great grave.

The passage demonstrates well Graham's hard-hitting line; the syllables close and strong, but never cramped up; falling in a pattern that is regular within its variance. The separation between his present and his past, the poet's place and the place of the man working in factory conditions, is nicely defined by use of the third person singular in conjunction with the

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(1) *The Nightfishing* by W.S. Graham. Faber and Faber, London, 1955.
(2) *The White Threshold* by W.S. Graham. The Grove Press, New York, 1949.

past tense. The pronoun makes the connection between the two states even as it draws the line that part them.

As in *The Nightfishing* the chief substance of the Letters, the felt experience on which the thoughts are worked, and out of which they arose, is the sea. Many poets have used the sea as a point of departure for their expression. In Graham's poems the sea is not a thing contemplated, or a symbol of whatever despairs or hopes spring subjectivly inside a poet when he sees it, or reads a reference to it (3). Graham talks of the sea as a fisherman. A person who penetrates that element in the course of his working life. One whom it commonly feeds, and sometimes destroys. There is not a 'pure' image of the sea in these poems, and this necessary familiarity is what gives the entire basis of his poem its validity.

> **You able-handed sea-blade**
> **Aglint with the inlaid**
> **Scales of the herring host**
> *(Letter 1)*
> **He's high**
> **Singing on the top and gallant**
> **Grace-notes of his longing**
> **Now let**
> **The sail creak and talk**
> **Over us and the light**
> **Swing at the slow mast-head.**
> *(Letter 2)*
> **The herring**
> **Have had their run for the night.**
> **Our money is in the net**
> *(Letter 7)*

Because of this base it is not necessary for him to advance an argument, or to work out a tale in the poems, and so capture the reader's attention and hold it as the poem advances. Graham may speak freely to his 'dear' ranging from mood to mood, over a position that is integral to his thought. And yet he is attentive to the person who will read his poems. He seeks to engage at all times his 'dear', or a person whom he will never know. He tells us to 'Listen', asks real questions, gives advice, guards against false ambiguity by explanation.

The manner in which he begins a poem is significant. Often the opening lines are quiet, even commonplace words of greeting. We are enticed inside the second and the third line, and then, suddenly moving under his control, but under our own steam we are abreast of the illusion and follow it to its end.

Graham's vocabulary is not large. The words are mostly of Saxon or Celtic origin. This gives the texture of the poems a hard, steely quality that does not, as in the case of his contemporary Robert Lowell, spring from the juxtaposing of vicious images and gentle, an abuse of violence. He can vary this hardness with a kind of direct love lyrical talk, as in Letter 5, when he dresses his love in slips of emerald, wild fox-fur, sea charms, and other things of a woman's longing. At one peak within these poems the image of a close sexuality stands obvious and stark. There is no point in quoting it or others like it. Separated from their context they would be weak, even obscure. The vital care that has made these poems makes it impossible to isolate the most meaningful passages as they arise from their position in the whole text as much as their particular phraseology. The density is such that Graham can at any time compare a part of his body, or his love's, to a part of the ship, or the sea. And this does not involve a change of direction or movement inside the poem. Throughout the Letters a shrewd regularity of pitch is maintained. Graham does not, as Thomas and Lowell do, produce the *howler*, the crashingly bad line or group of lines, distracting the attention or turning it to laughter.

As a drinking man, he includes the bartenders and bar-rooms he has known as part of the mass of the poem.

> **And hears old Mooney call Time**
> **Bogtongued like doomsday over**
> **The bar and hears Mooney's**
> **Hanging lamp lapping**
> **The sweet oil from its bowl.**
> *(Letter 4)*

The *Nighfishing* is a book of particular importance. For some time it has been possible to repeat, not without a certain smugness, that no mature poetry was being written. It is true that Thomas never grew up, and the easy niceness of Messrs Gunn, Saunders, Merwin, Hartley, Amis and Co., arise from a closed and sheltered area of experience, appealing to an audience similarly conditioned. Graham's bald and major talent exists in contradiction to this unreal world. He is beginning to provide a base for younger poets, those who are not writing yet, to enjoy and learn from. His poems, even in Spring, are thick with fruit. This being

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(3) Coleridge had only visual experience of the sea when he wrote *The Ancient Mariner*.

so, it is a serious error on the part of the new Directors of the Poetry Society in England, to refuse his book their recommendation.

Christopher Logue

Curzio Malaparte: the vision of defeat

1

Despite the biblical injunction, men, their works, and their actions must be judged and, indeed, judged by men. But judgment, however severe, is quite a different thing than calumny and hypocrisy. "No genius," Dr. Johnson assures us in *The Idler,* "was ever blasted by breath of critics." Yet if the work of genius does remain unblemished, it is certainly true that often its readers or would-be readers do not. A bestselling author in numerous countries, Curzio Malaparte still remains one of the most misunderstood writers of our times. Perhaps this misunderstanding can be traced directly to the rancour and hatred for Malaparte the man.

Curzio Malaparte, we have been told repeatedly, especially by that organ of eternal verity, *Time,* is a Fascist, in fact, worse than a Fascist, is an opportunist and a turncoat: he alledgedly betrayed his German "masters" and, worst of all, he betrayed his American "masters." According to one of the critics of that formidable literary magazine, *The New Yorer,* whose criticism even sinks occasionally to the same dismal level of suburban irrelevance as its fiction, Curzio Malaparte is a "sick man" who is too spiteful to drink down the medicine that is good for him, especially those remedies which emanate from the New World.

It would not matter what was said or rumored about Malaparte, it would not matter really if he is or is not a Fascist, if these attacks against him had not the intention of diminishing the importance of his writing. This is all the more unfortunate because we need now more than ever to read and reread Malaparte and to understand his work, not simply for his sake, nor even for the sake of those often specious "objective" literary standards we have read about, but, more imperatively, because of what Malaparte's work, its artistry and its motivating ideas and concepts, can offer us in relation to our own present creative impasse.

Certainly, all literature, however excellent, is not equally valuable at all times. There are no eternal, immutable rules of nutrition; we need different foods in various proportions at different times, in relation to our physical condition, the season of the year, and our age. And so it is with literature. Granted *Le Grand Cyrus* of Mlle Scudéry is an excellent novel of its sort, yet it would be rather difficult to find much relevence in it to our present situation.

A Fascist, Malaparte *was.* It should be noted that he openly broke with Fascism in 1931. At the time when so many other Italian writers were gathering cob-

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webs in the Café Greco or lounging comfortably in sun by the shores of *Mare Nostrum,* Malaparte was writing the *Technique of the Coup d'Etat* and numerous articles in the French and British press attacking the Fascist state. For this, he spent a stretch on the prison island of Lipari and was ever afterwards subjected to constant police surveillance. Even so, he was still the sole writer in that land, now so full of Resistance Heroes, who openly wrote of his imprisonment. Later, he was the sole Italian writer who openly deplored the infamous "Stab in the Back" of France in 1940. Still later, in 1941, he openly criticized the attack on the Soviet Union by the Nazi-Fascist forces, for which he was arrested by the SS and expelled from the Ukranian Front. It becomes evident then that *Kaputt* was no simple stroke of opportunism and, if one understands the basis of Malaparte's criticism, neither was *The Skin.* It should, of course, be quite clear that most of the attacks on Malaparte from across the Atlantic and in Italy are neither due to a hatred of opportunism nor Fascism, but rather to the irritation aroused by that astounding book, *The Skin.*

Someone has wisely observed that there is nothing more disturbing than a man without a party, a man who has not chosen sides, has not subscribed to a program, and who does not allow himself to be counted with either the Yeas or the Nays of this world. Since 1931, Curzio Malaparte has belonged to no party. He has not allowed himself to be categorized, to be neatly described by two *Time*—style adjectives. Indeed, it may be a fault to pose the questions that Malaparte does, to see and report what he has, without attempting some answer, some constructive solution. His vision may be a negative one, but at least, unlike that of many of our contemporaries, it is a vision that does rest upon the things of this world. Here, perhaps, Malaparte has his greatest relevance for us. In *The Skin,* he points out that "...one real merit of young Communist writers, and of young Fascist writers, was that *they accepted the responsibilities of their age and environment.*"

2

"It's quite clear," said one of the youths, "that you belong to a defeated generation."

"Undoubtedly," I replied, "and I set great store by it... I am not at all ashamed of belonging to a defeated generation, in a defeated and ruined Europe. The thing I regret is having endured five years of imprisonment and exile. And for what? For nothing."

"Your years of hard labor," said the youth, "don't entitle you to any respect."

"And why?" I said.

"Because you didn't endure them in a noble cause".—*The Skin.*

Curzio Malaparte was born in 1898, at Prato, a small industrial town near Florence. At the Cicognini College and the

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University of Rome, he developed the love of the arts which is so obvious in his work. When he was 16 years old, in 1914, he ran away to France and joined the Garibaldi Legion, made up of Italian volunteers. Later, when Italy entered the First World War, he was transferred to the Italian Front. He was wounded several times during the war and was decorated by both the French and the Italian governments. "Say what they will about Malaparte," says a friend of his, "his enemies don't dare accuse him of lacking courage."

After the war, Malaparte completed his studies. He entered the Italian diplomatic service and served with the Italian delegation to the Versailles Conference. He was later with the Italian Embassy in Warsaw. In 1921, he left the diplomatic service in order to devote himself entirely to writing. His first book, a collection of anti-war essays, *La rivolta dei santi maladetti,* was published in 1921. All three editions of the book were seized and destroyed by the police. He continued writing, however, and had better luck with his other books. It was at this time that he entered the Fascist movement. In 1929 and 1930, he edited the important Turin newspaper, *La Stampa.*

Disillusioned with Fascism, especially after the Vatican Concordat—Malaparte's family is Protestant—he left Italy in 1931 for France, where he published the *Technique of the Coup d'Etat,* an exposure of Fascism and Nazism. The book, naturally, was banned in Italy and Germany. It was burned on a public square in Leipzig by a Nazi hangman in 1933. *Le bonhomme Lenin,* a biography written in 1932, was also banned. In 1933, while in Italy on a visit, Malaparte was arrested and condemned to five years on the island of Lipari. Freed later, due to his ill-health and his international renown, he was nevertheless subjected to continual police control and occasional "preventive arrests," such as on the occasion of Hitler's visit to Italy.

A captain in the Alpine Corps of the Italian Army Reserve, Malaparte was mobilized in 1940. He was ordered to serve as a war correspondent for the Milan magazine, *Tempo,* reporting the attack against France of an Italian Alpine Division over the lower slopes of Mont Blanc. His fictionalized account was heavily censured because of its sympathy for France and was finally suppressed. Only in 1947 were all of the sections brought together in "novel" form as *Il Sole è cieco.* Despite this experience, Malaparte was sent in 1941 to cover the war in Russia as a correspondent for *Corriere della Sera.* His articles provoked the SS to arrest him and expel him from the Ukranian Front. These articles, many of which were suppressed, were collected in 1943 and published under the title, *Il Volga nasce in Europa.*

Malaparte sought refuge in Finland, where he remained for two years before going to Sweden. On July 27, 1943, hearing of the arrest of Mussolini by the King, he returned to Italy. After September 8, 1943, he was appointed liaison officer between General Clark's headquarters in Naples and the Italian Corps of Liberation and the Partisan "Potente" Division ("It is our duty to show ourselves worthy of the shame of Italy."—*The Skin*). During this time, he published *Kaputt,* that unique book which had a worldwide success. In 1949, he published *The Skin,* an equally astounding book, a bestseller which excited much indignation in Italy and abroad. Emilio Cecchi, former head of the Fascist Grand Academy was moved to comment, "Better hypocrisy and silence than to tell some truths." Also following the war, Malaparte returned to one of his earlier interests, the cinema, and wrote and directed his first film, *Il Cristo proibito,* in 1950. The following year, it was awarded the Grand Prize at the Berlin Film Festival.

3

"It's of no importance," said Jack, "whether what Malaparte relates is true or false. That isn't the question. The question is whether or not his work is art."—*The Skin.*

Without a doubt, Malaparte's two most important books are *Kaputt* and *The Skin.* The two books are complementary, one presenting the Gothic nightmare of Fascist power in Europe and the other revealing the "plague" of the false liberation of Western Europe. *The Skin* is dedicated to the "brave, good, and honest American soldiers... who died in vain for the cause of European freedom." This is not to say that Nazi rule and the American occupation are the same thing. Yet Malaparte is acutely aware that it is far easier to fight against the horrors, the living death, of German conquest than the infinitely more subtle, more pernicious infection of a delusive liberation.

"Before the liberation," Malaparte writes in *The Skin,* "the peoples of Europe suffered with a wonderful dignity... They were fighting *to avoid death.* And when men fight to avoid death, they cling with a tenacity born of desperation to all that constitutes the living and eternal part of human life... But after the liberation, men had to fight *in order to live.* It is a humiliating, horrible thing... It is no longer a fight against oppression, a fight for freedom, for human dignity, for honor. It is a fight against hunger. It is a fight for a crust of bread, for a little fuel, for a rag with which to cover the nakedness of one's own children, for a handful of straw on which to lie." In neither book does Malaparte shrink from revealing the utmost horrors and miseries that humanity is capable of creating and enduring. Probably in no other works of modern European literature are readers exposed more systematically and calculatedly to a landscape of terror, to a bizarre vision of torment and blood and putrefaction.

Everything is revealed with the burning, passionate, ferocious artistry of a Mirbeau or a Huysmans, which is mixed with a Swiftian satire, a cruel, macabre, almost cynical humor at times. The narrative of both books is unfolded in a chronology of analogy and memory that pivots around certain central themes, each with clusters of reminiscences, anecdotes, and comments that suggest the technique of Proust. But it is particularly the terrible individualistic vision that holds the reader at once in repugnance and enchantment. It is a vision uniquely blended of the sumptuous and the opulant juxtaposed with passages of austere naturalistic prose. We feel carried far from literature for a comparison, to the Inquisition scenes of Goya, the Apocalypses of Bosch, or the 18th century hell of Hogarth.

But is it all true? The Nürnberg records will suffice, as far as *Kaputt* is concerned. As for *The Skin,* it is worth noting that Italian critics of the book assailed Malaparte, not for lying, but rather for presenting unpleasant truths. One thing that the critics had to admit is the magnificence of Malaparte's prose, its strange and sinister beauty. Indeed, it has been a long time since Italian literature has had such a master of the language or a *raconteur* of such power. It has been especially hard for the critics, except by silence, to avoid the conclusion that *Kaputt,* which Malaparte considers his best book, and *The Skin* are masterpieces such as Italian literature has not seen since *I Malavoglia* and *Mastro-Don Gesualdo.* With the exception of the work of Cesare Pavese and the early novels of Vasco Pratolini and possibly the novels of Italo Svevo (who after all did not belong to this generation), the much-touted Italian post-war literary renaissance has not produced anything of equal merit.

These two books, however, far from represent the gamut of Malaparte's writing. He has published eight other novels or "tales", as he prefers to call them, between 1927 and the present. Of these eight, several have a quality and a significance that make them worthy of close reading. Principal among these books are the two collections of stories, *Fughe in Prigione* (1936) and *Sangue* (1937), and the "novel", *Il Sole è cieco* (1941-47), a semi-fictionalized account of the attack against France in 1940.

All of these earlier writings bear all the marks of style and technique that will later blossom with such intensity, but, unlike the later books, the tone is muted, nostalgic, held in check from reaching the cutting sharpness of the later books. It should be remembered that the earlier books were written under the eyes of the Fascist censors. Yet the moving tenderness of a story such as "Un cane come me" in *Fughe in Prigione,* the story of a stray dog that Malaparte picked up on Lipari—whose haunted, tortured death is revealed in one of the chapters of *The Skin*—, or "Un giorno felice" in *Sangue* in which the reader is presented the disillusionment and gratuitous cruelty of a minor Fascist government official, are unforgetable stories.

In *Il Sole è cieco,* the influence of the cinema is unmistakable. The narrative moves forward slowly, watching the attack on France over the slopes of Mont Blanc like the lens of camera. Commentary by the author was hardly necessary in this short book about the stupid and vile onslaught of Fascist Italy against an already conquered and humiliated France. But the soldiers of Malaparte's book are conscious of their guilt. They do not "die before the machine guns of the Fort of Seloge or under the fire of the artillery in the Col des Fours with the surly, livid faces of assassins." A "Stab in the Back", indeed, but, continues Malaparte, "It was the same blow which struck the backs of both French and Italian soldiers in June of 1940." The real strength of the book lies in its simple rejection of Fascist heroics, its awareness of the abyss into which Italy was being plunged to satisfy a dictator's dreams of glory.

Besides the limpidity of his prose, his ability to weave together significantly every element of detail, his almost metaphysical use of language, in sum, all of the admirable richness of his craft, we must again seize upon Malaparte's insistence on the responsibility of the writer as a witness and critic of his age, a difficult, onerous task for any man. "I do not like to witness the spectacle or human baseness," he writes in *The Skin*. "It is repugnant for me to sit, as a judge or as spectator, watching men descend the last rungs of the ladder of degradation. I am always afraid they will turn around and smile at me." Difficult, painful, but necessary for a living literature. It would not be so imperative to insist upon this aspect of the work of Curzio Malaparte if today so much English and American literature, at least, were not dedicated to the cults of sensibility without significance, style without aim, the various escapes into adolescence, the trivialities of Westchester County, or that academicism that has become hopelessly Alexandrian in its isolation from life.

If there is one element that we should approach with caution in Malaparte's writing, it is his despair, the almost nihilistic bitterness and hopelessness of his thought. The 1947 edition of *Il Sole è cieco,* he prefaced with these words: "It is necessary now to say without any regard for the living, that there is nothing worth dying for. It is not even worthwhile to die to prove that it is useless to die, that death helps nothing, solves nothing, not even to prove that the dead are better

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than the living." If Malaparte's attitude were correct, mankind is most certainly doomed, for, it follows easily, that there is nothing worth living for either. Sometimes, it is easier to think so than to struggle, to suffer the confusion and disillusion of an often aimless hope, or to know the scorn of that part of the world that would rather be dead than proven wrong. At least, we must admit, Malaparte does have the honesty to inform us that his vision is, finally, one of defeat.

Richard Gibson

a Malaparte bibliography

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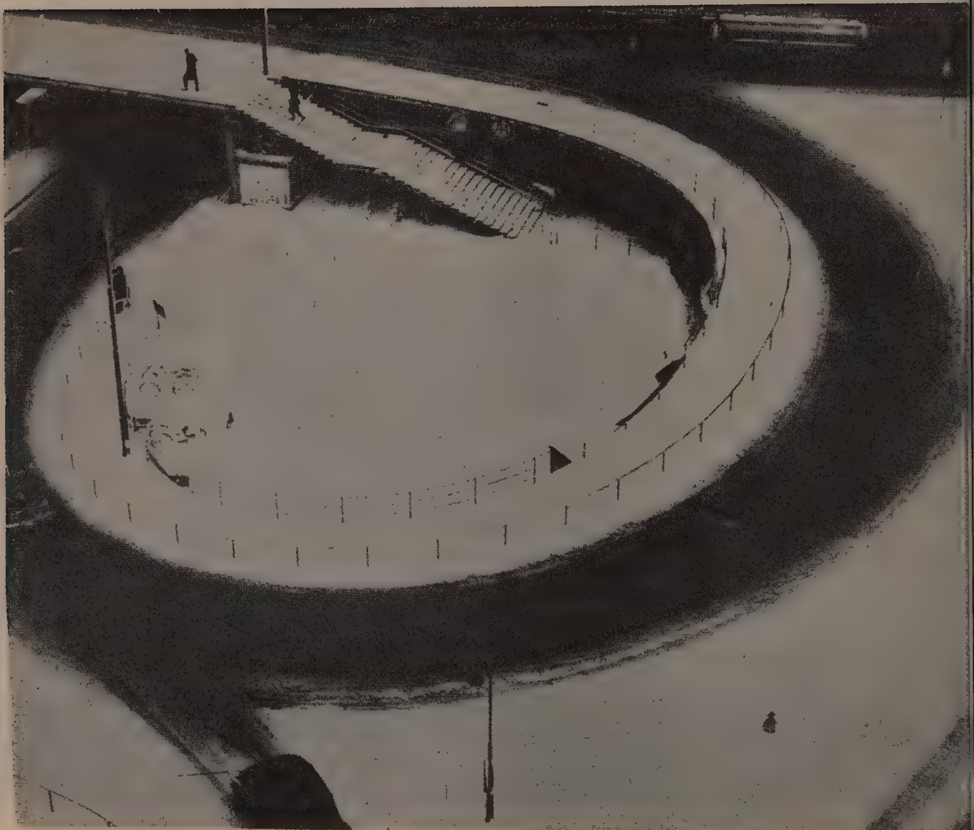

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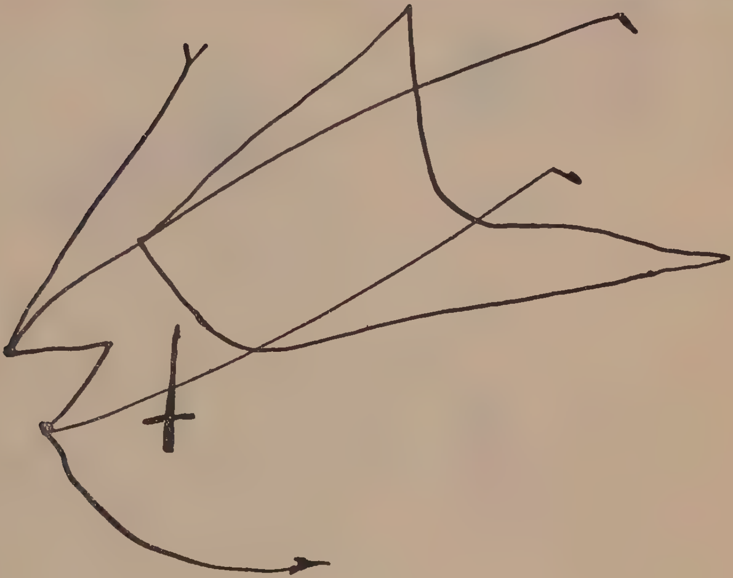

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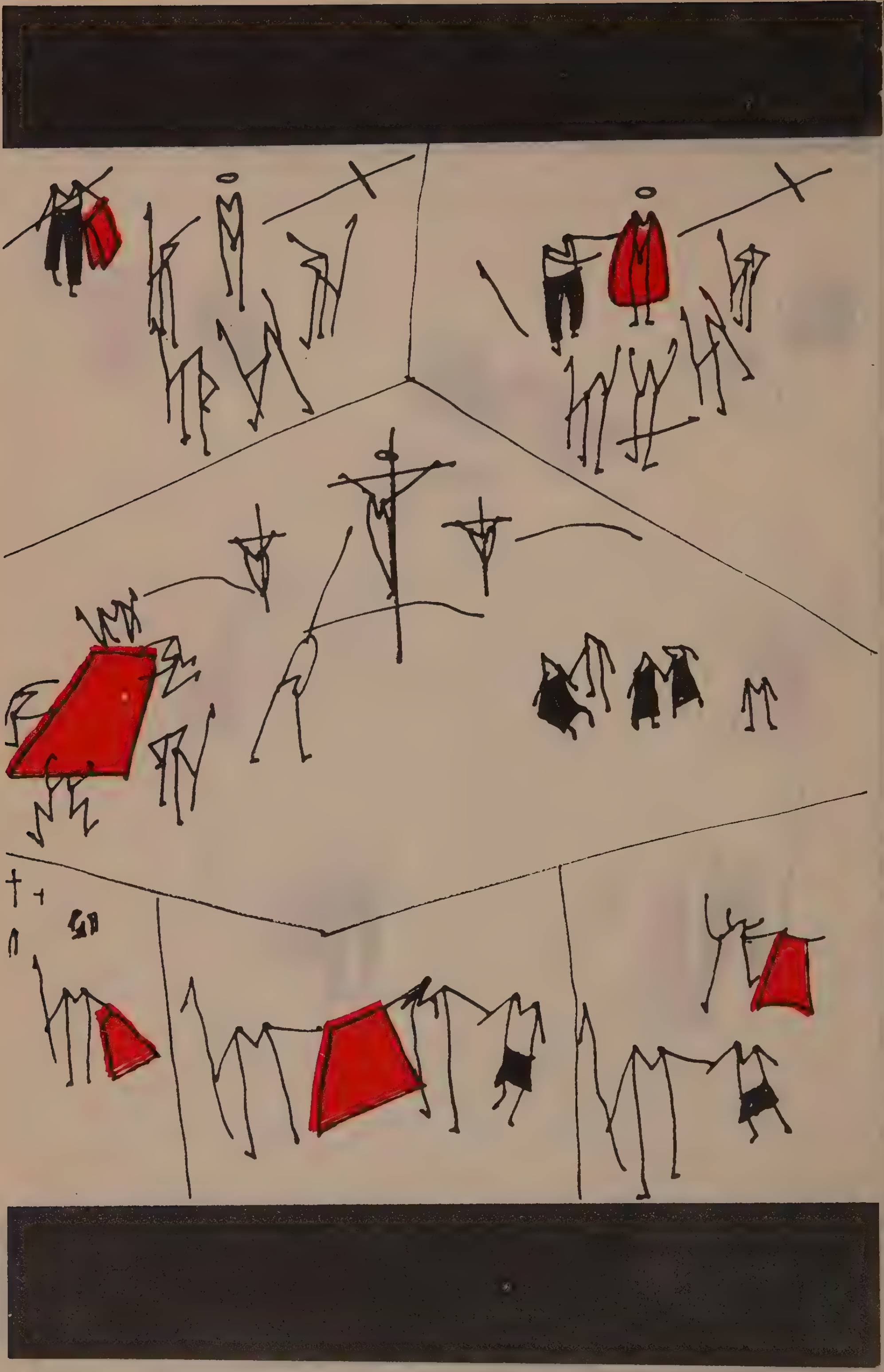

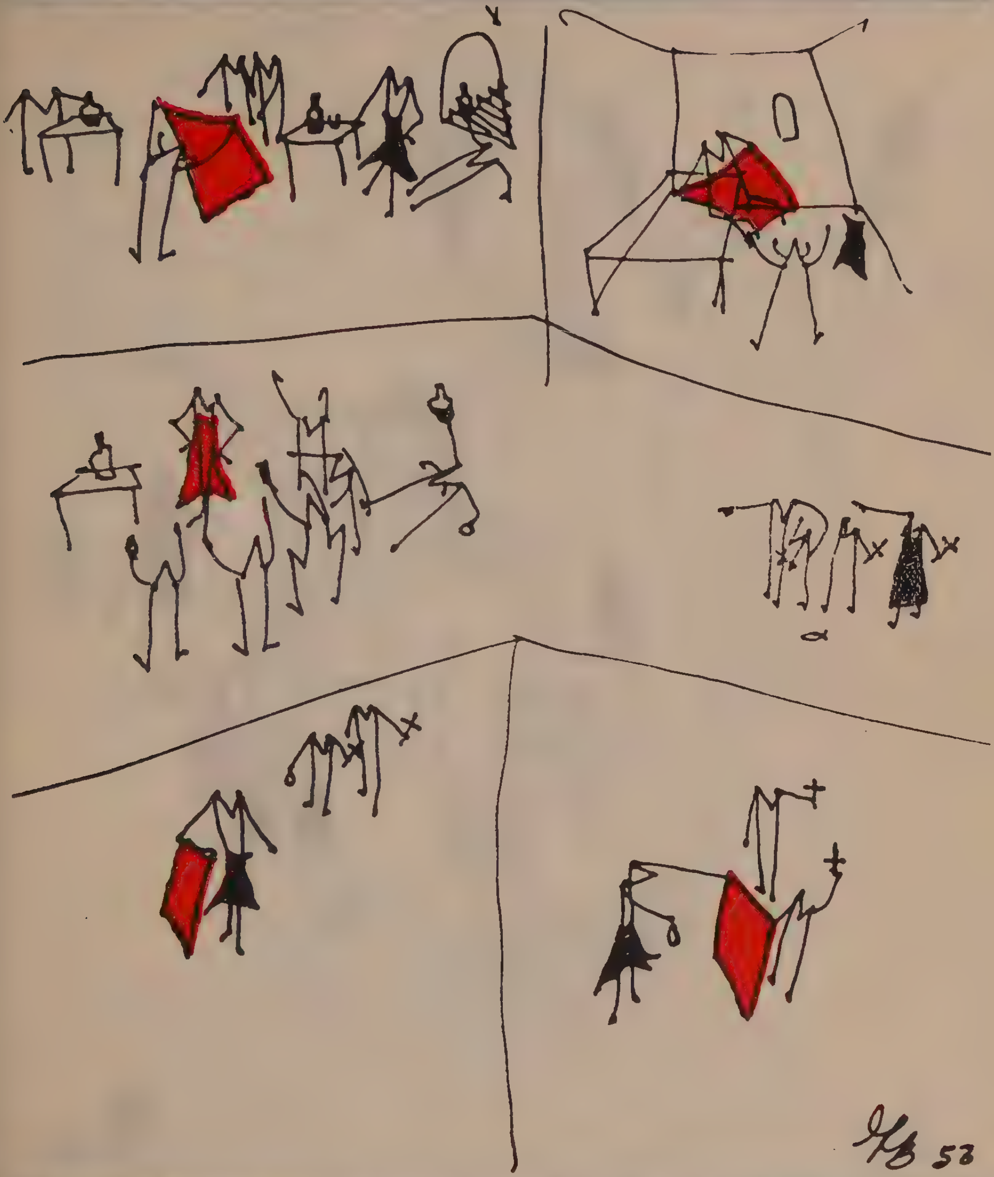

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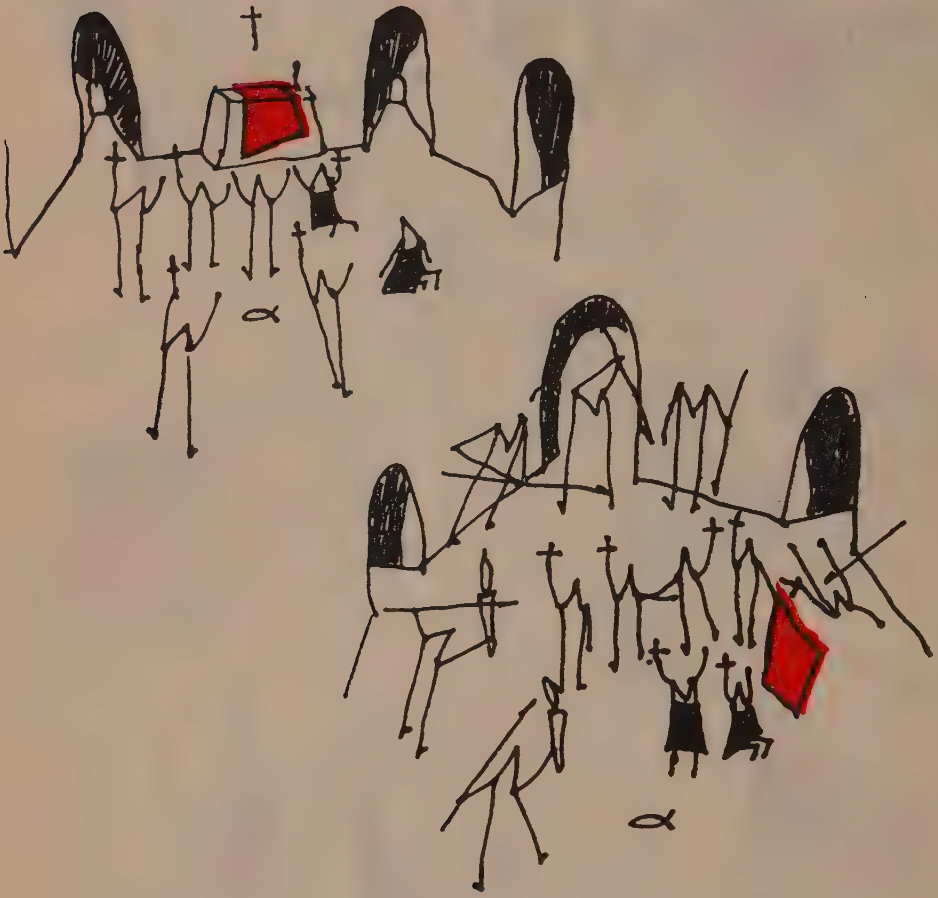

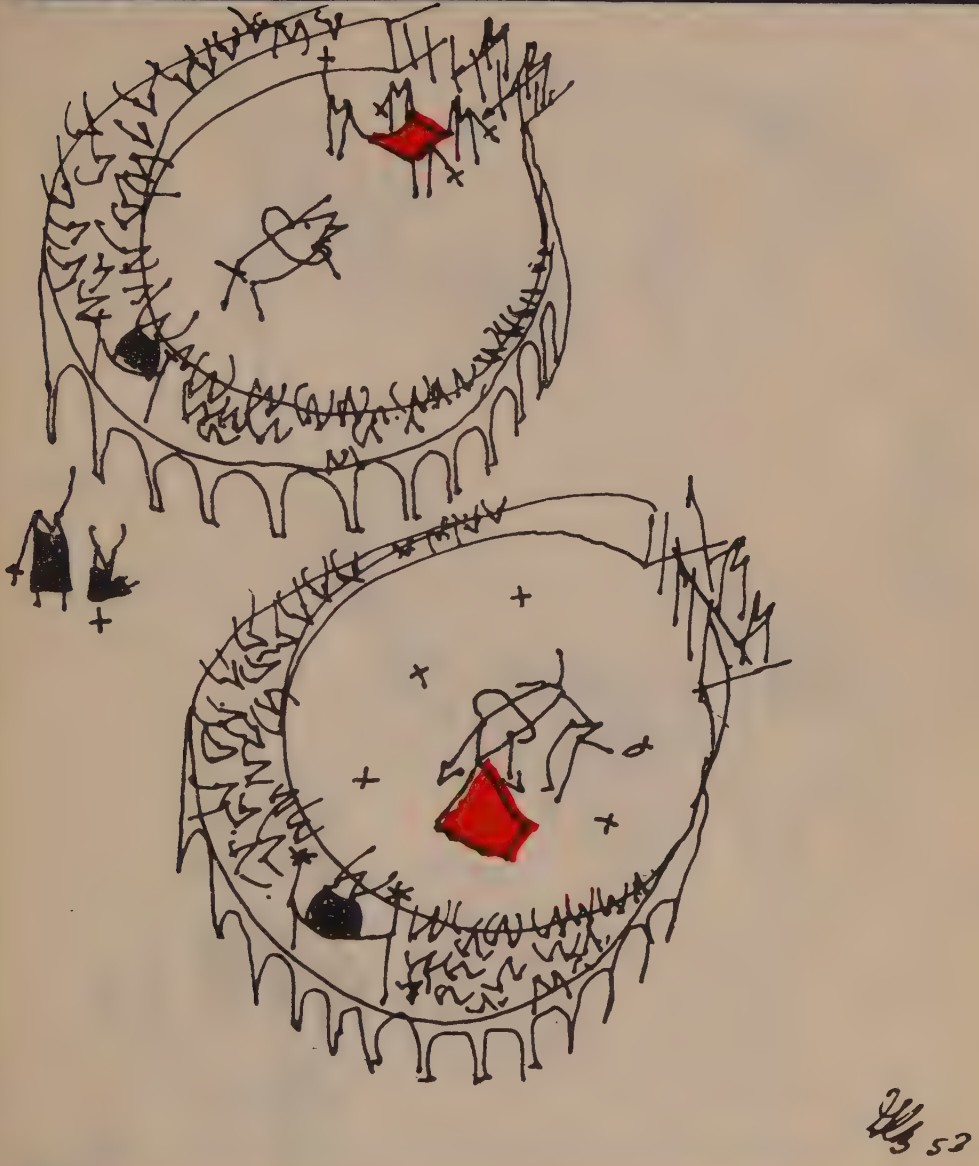
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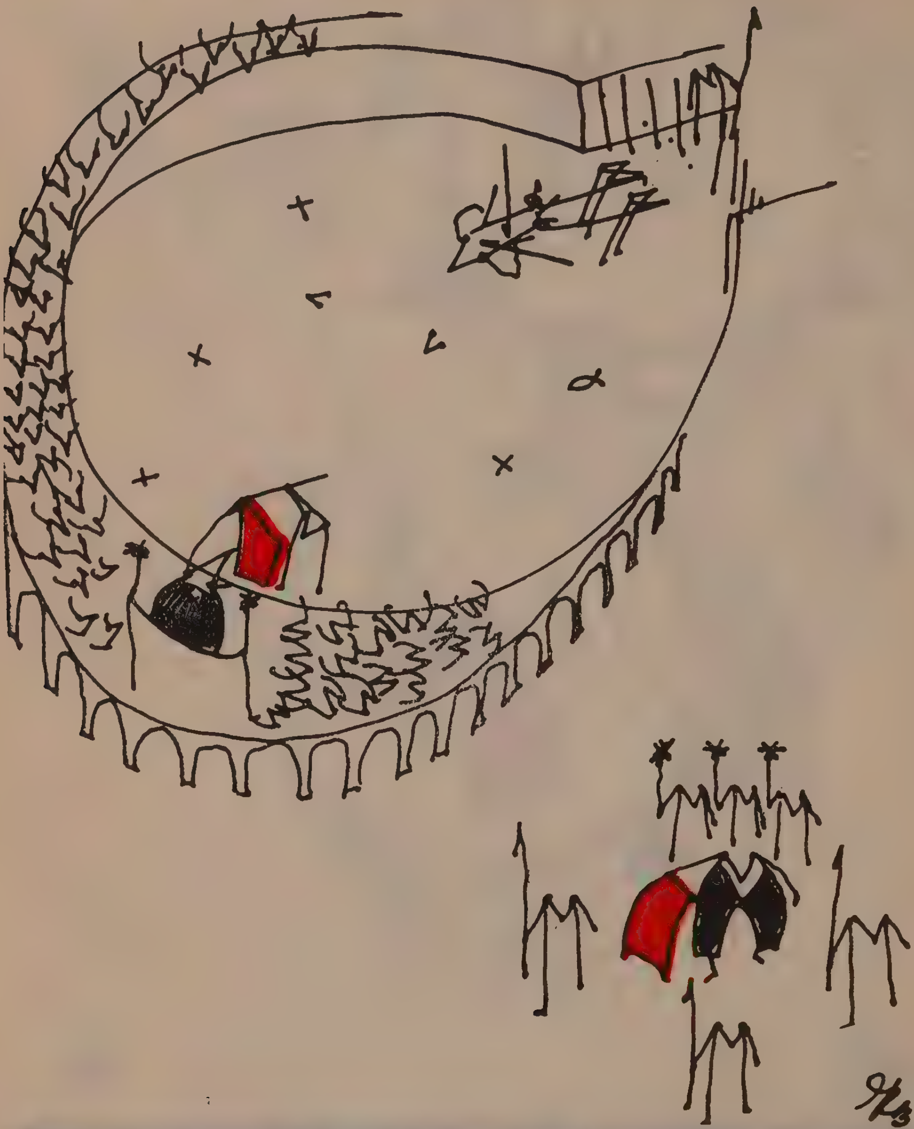

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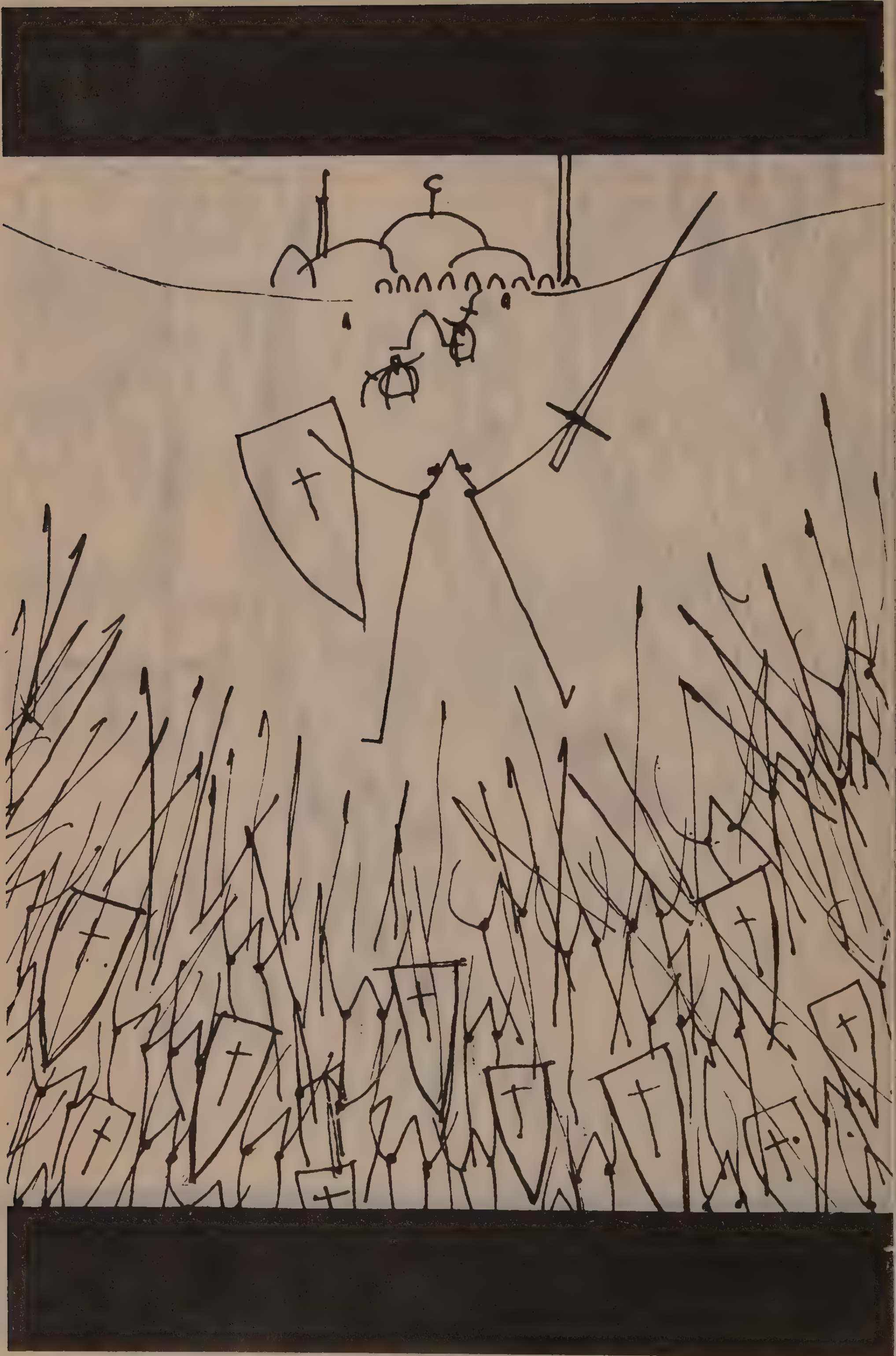

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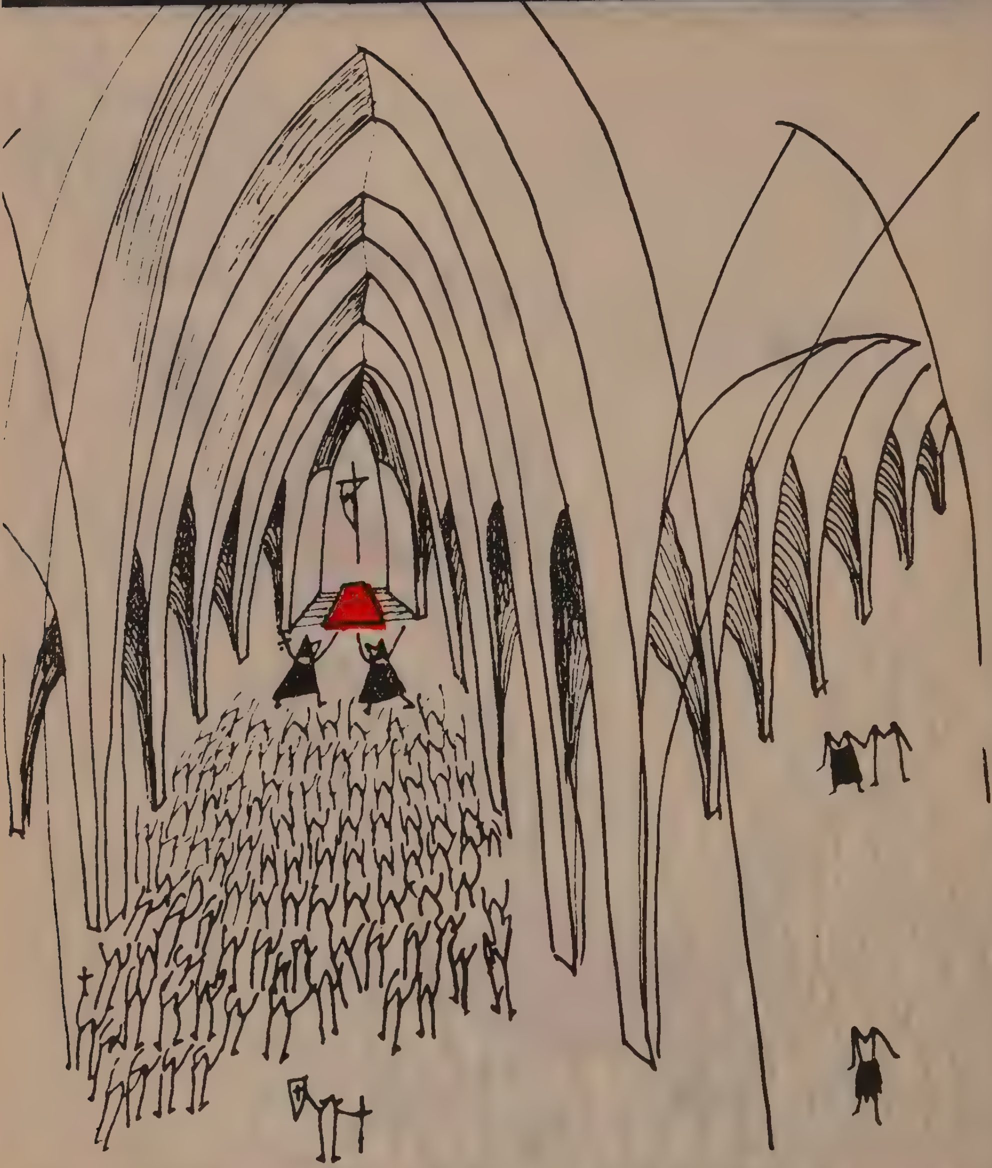

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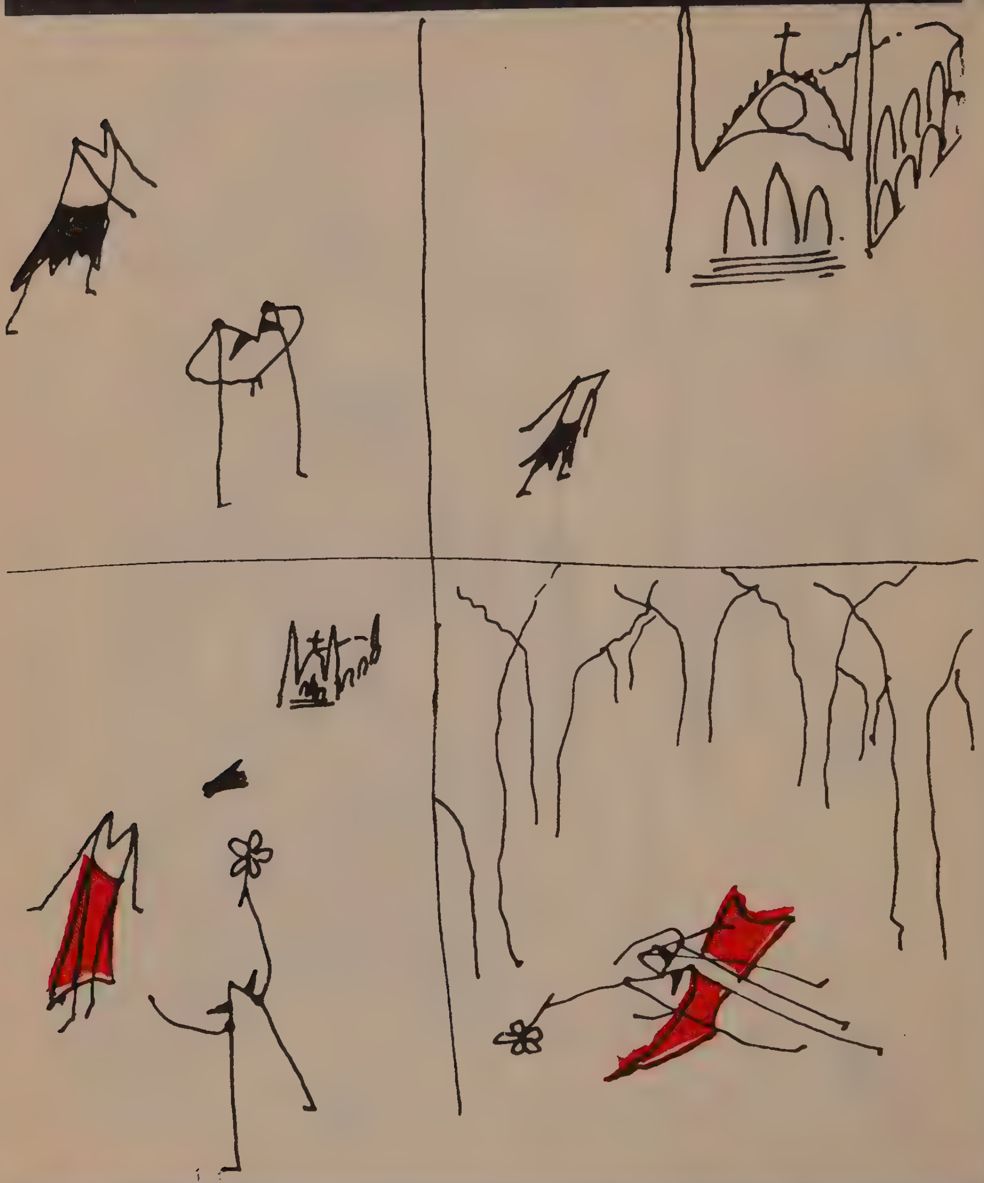

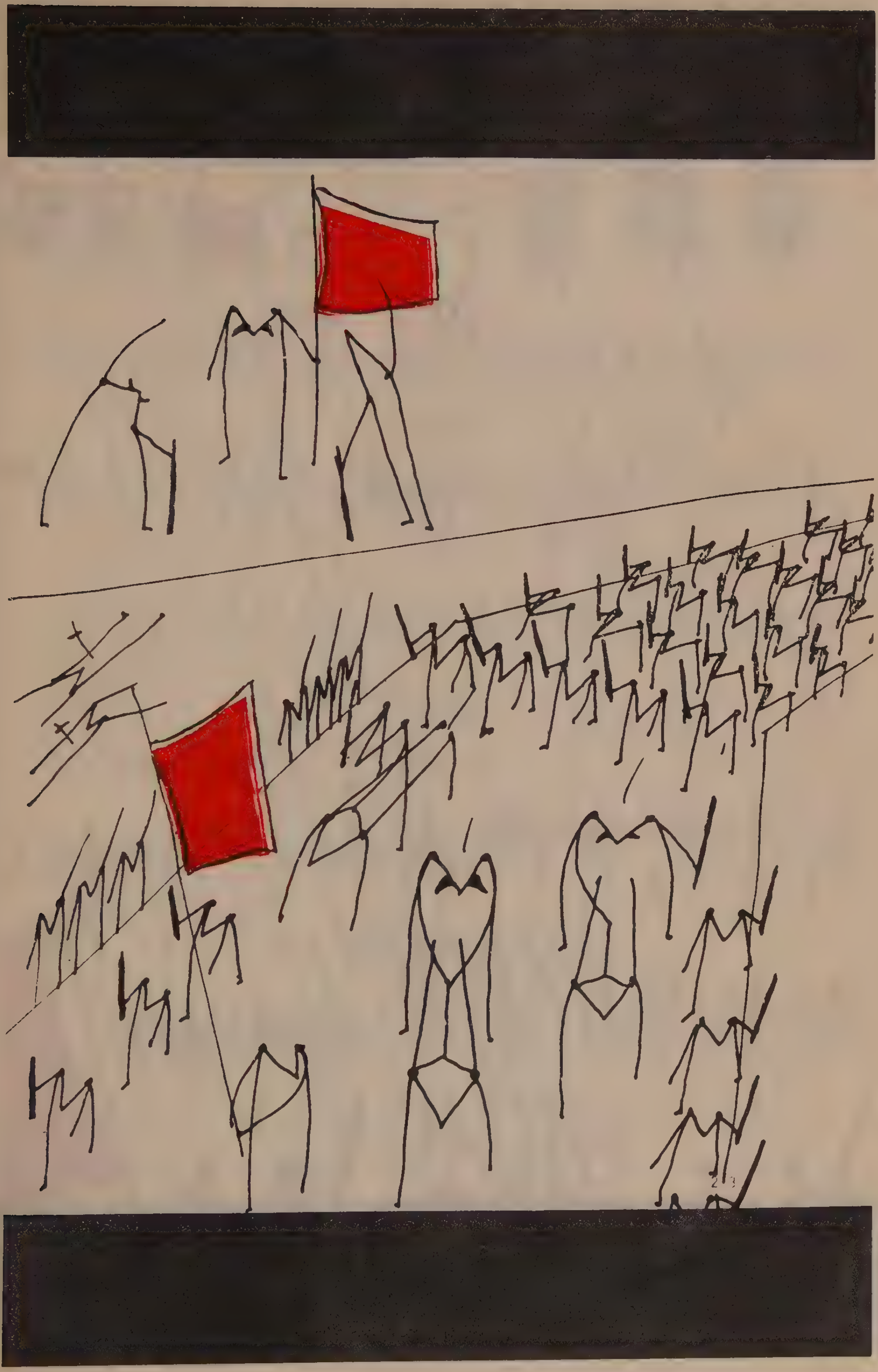
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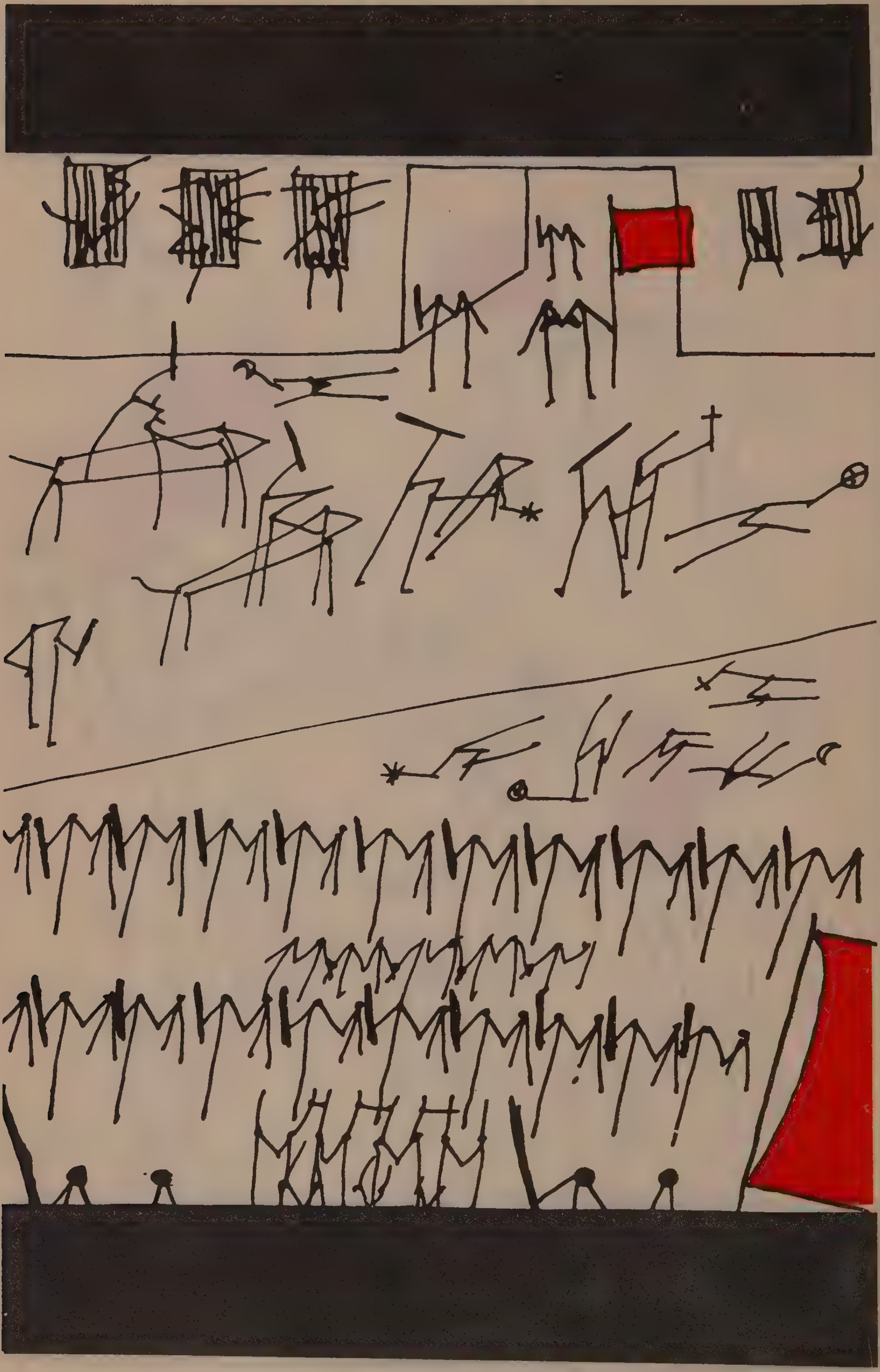

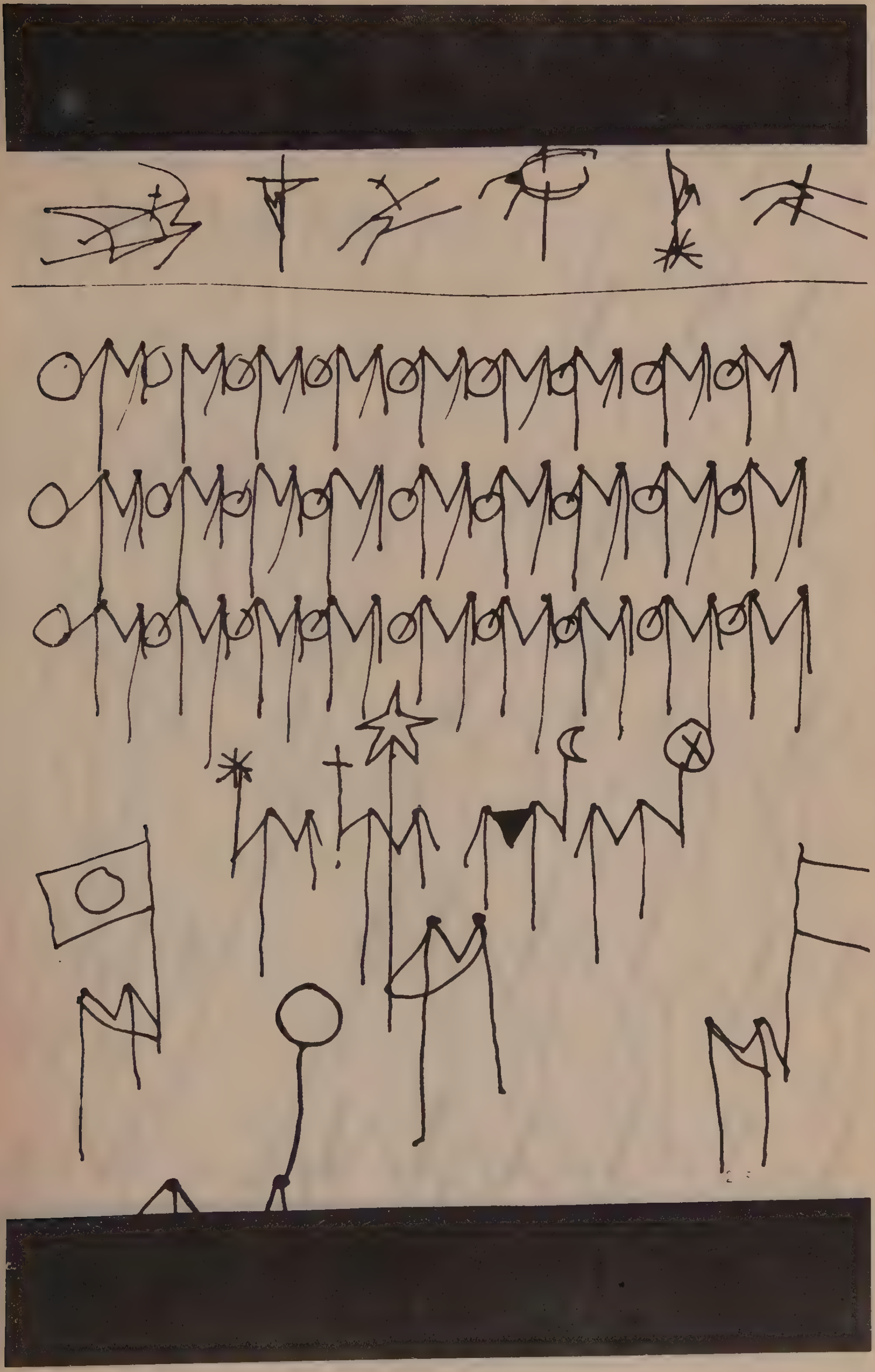

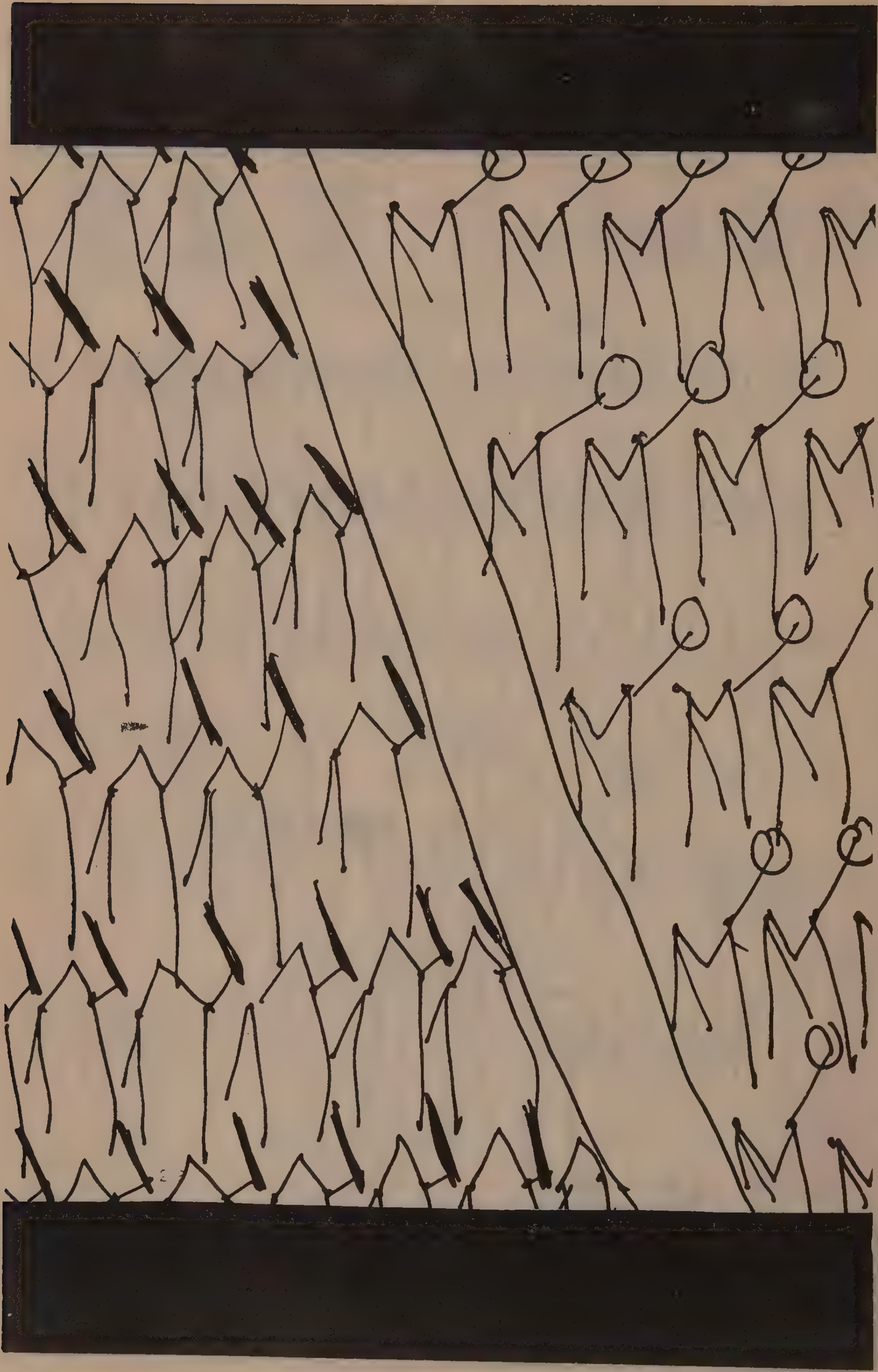

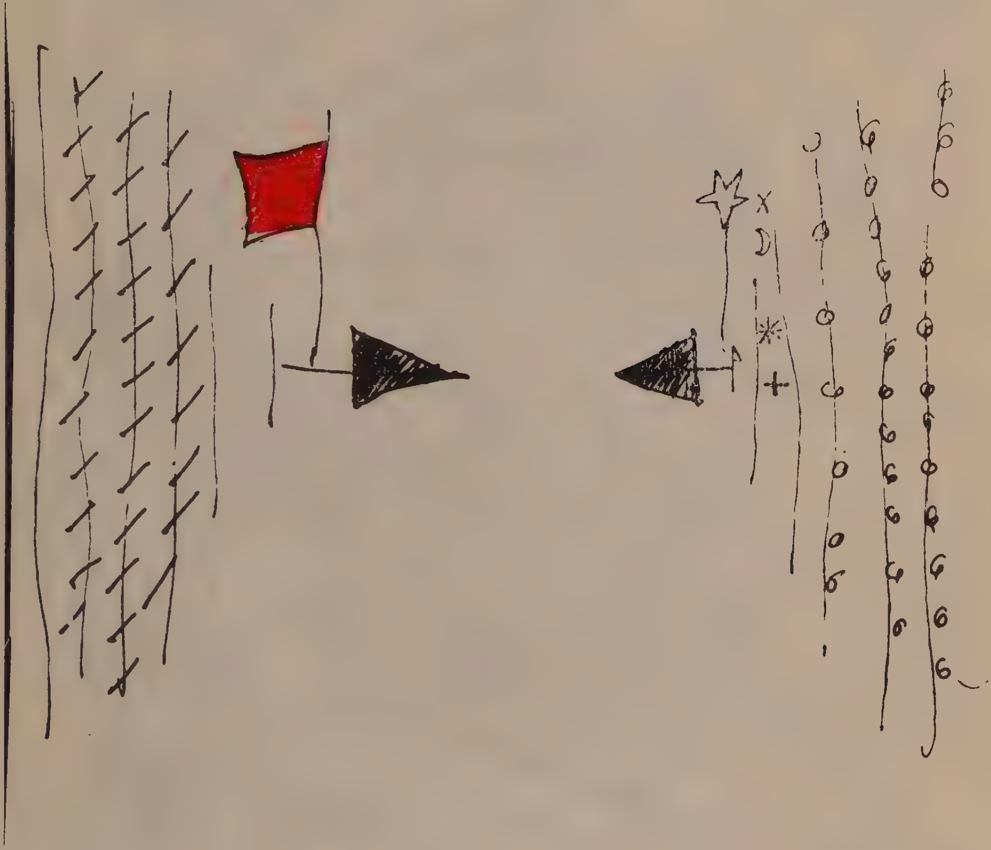

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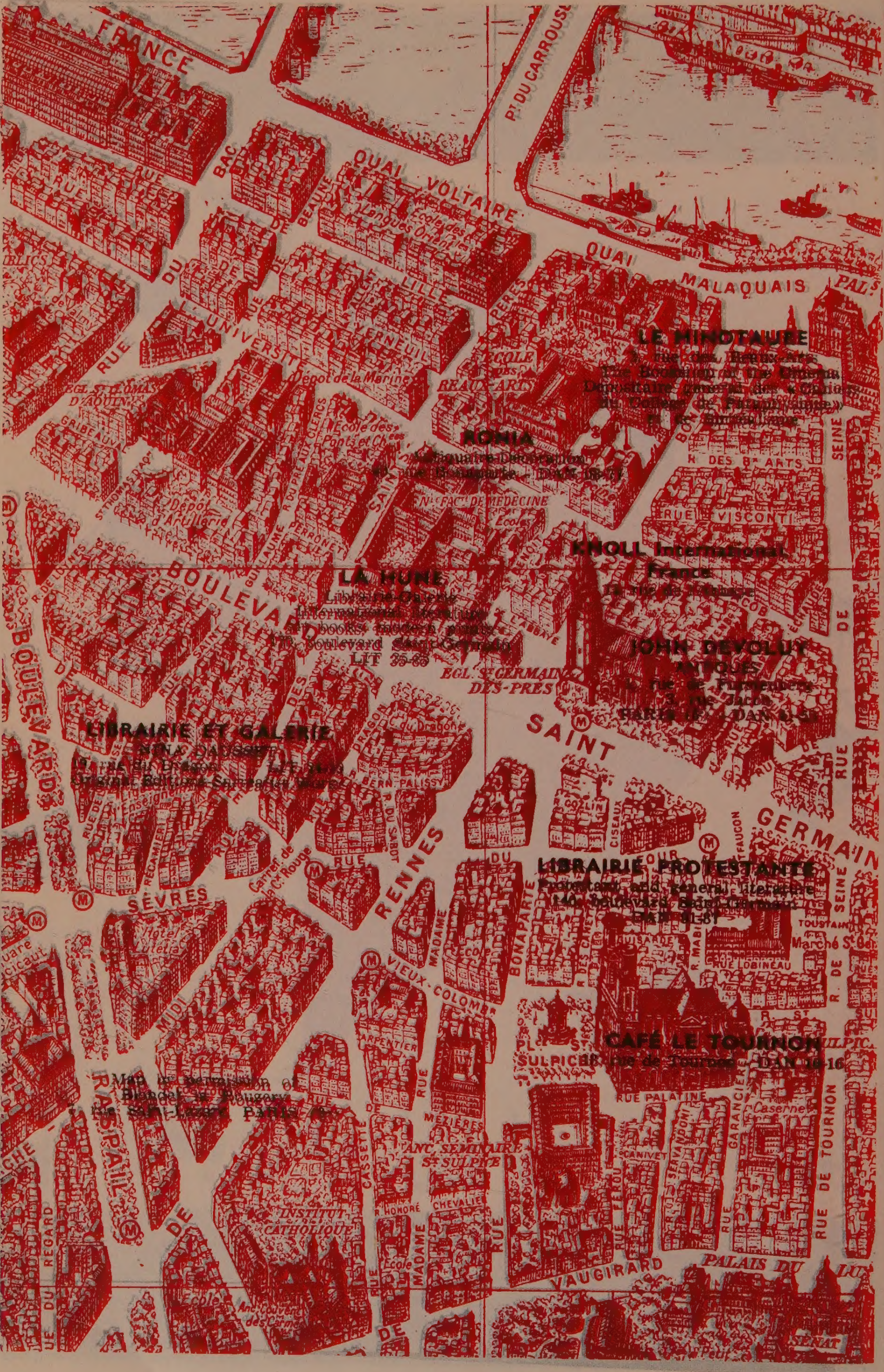
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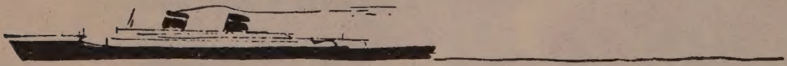

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